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TALES.

By

AUGUST STRINDBERG



CHATTO AND WINDUS
LONDON

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THIS translation of August Strindberg's *Sagor* was begun at Uppsala University, Sweden, in 1923. When I first came across the book, I thought that it should be accessible to English readers; but as it was specially congenial to me, the translating was a labour of love, worked at over a number of years for my solace and pleasure, and at first with little thought of publication. But I could not have completed it without the help of some English and many Swedish friends, Dr. Olof Östergren in particular.

Strindberg is best known in this country as the author of grimly realistic plays such as *The Father* ('Fadren') and *Miss Julia* ('Fröken Julie'), from which he progressed fairly naturally, first to plays of morbid obsession, like *There are Crimes and Crimes* ('Brott och brott'), and then to expressionistic fantasy—*The Ghost Sonata* ('Spöksonaten'). This is far from the whole truth; so far that to any one more than casually acquainted with Strindberg it does not seem to be truth at all. Certainly, he was a great dramatist; and certainly, also, his dangerously unbalanced imagination drove him more than once to, and even over, the verge of insanity.

But he was not only a dramatist ; he was also a lyrical poet ; and some good judges consider his novels and short stories—for example *The Red Room* (' Röda Rummet '), *Marriage* (' Giftas '), and *The People of Hemsö* (' Hemsöborna ')—better than his plays. Again, a great deal of his work was sane enough. He dramatized the lives of most of the famous Swedish monarchs ; he wrote sketches of Swedish life in his own day, whose vividness and accuracy is remarkable ; he was at least a competent painter ; and he was one of the pioneers of Swedish socialism. Now that we are getting tired of savage and sordid drama, and also of expressionism, it is time to revalue the work of perhaps the greatest European writer of the later nineteenth century. Needless to say, this revaluation has already taken place in his own country. And it is to be hoped that the translations published by the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation will broaden the knowledge of Strindberg in England.

The Father was written in 1887, and *Miss Julia* in 1888. *There are Crimes and Crimes* appeared in 1899, and was followed by a succession of Swedish historical plays. The expressionistic fantasies belong to the beginning of the twentieth century, and overlap with the historical plays. But in 1903 appeared a collection of short moral fairy-tales and alleg-

ories—there is no English word with the same flavour as the Swedish word *saga*—which are here translated, and which throw a surprising light on the Strindberg with whom the English-speaking world is most familiar. For they are happy work on the whole ; sometimes tenderly romantic, sometimes childlike, but at the same time virile in their humour ; occasionally sentimental, but always essentially healthy. Their vitality is perhaps their greatest merit ; but they are also full of genuine Scandinavian wisdom, the wisdom of a people that has its roots in the soil, that is not afraid of its feelings, and that has a keen sense of the roughnesses as well as the firm foundations of life, and of the grotesque as well as of simple beauty. And yet the familiar Strindberg is clearly to be seen beneath the surface. His *Sagor* almost carry us away into the world of Hans Andersen ; but not quite.

Strindberg's style is remarkable for its wealth, vigour, and originality. He takes words and phrases from many local and social dialects, coins others when he pleases with great daring and creative power, and fuses the whole into an organic prose of striking vitality and beauty. I have had to give up the attempt to reproduce his idiom, and to content myself with reproducing in my own, as nearly as I can, its effect on me.

No doubt, to an Englishman, many of the allusions to Swedish life, tradition, and habit will be puzzling ; but these unpretentious tales must not be burdened with notes, and the imagination of the friendly reader will supply any defects in his knowledge.

L. J. POTTS.

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PRONUNCIATION

o, long [Røskilde]=English 'oo.'

å, long [Skår-ric, Håsjö]=French 'au' as in
'aube.'

a, short [Alleberg]=English short 'o.'

j [Jamtland]=English consonantal 'y.'

g, before e, i, y, a, o, and final after r [Västergylln,
Alleberg]=English consonantal 'y.'

sj, and sk before e, i, y, a, o [Håsjö, Norden-
sköld, Røskilde]--English 'sh.'

For the rest, the Swedish words in this book more
or less follow the ordinary conventions of
Continental pronunciation

At Midsummer

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AT midsummer, the bridal season of the earth in Northern lands, when the soil holds high holiday, and spring-water runs freely, and the flowers of the field stand upright, and the birds sing—it was then that the dove came from the woods and perched outside the cottage where the ninety-year-old mother lay in bed.

The old dame had been^a bed-ridden for twenty years, and she could see through the window everything that happened on the farm where her two sons worked. But the world and its inhabitants appeared to her after a special fashion of her own, for the window-panes were discoloured all the hues of the rainbow ; she had only to turn her head a little, and everything looked red, yellow, green, and lilac in turn. Thus, on a winter day when the trees were covered with hoar-frost as if their leaves had been silvered over, she moved her head on the pillow and they became green ; it was summer ; the field was yellow and the sky blue—even if it was grey in reality. This made her feel like a magician, and her life was never dull. And the magic panes had another gift ; they were curved, so that they sometimes magnified, and sometimes reduced, what was outside.

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Thus, when her big son came home in a disagreeable mood, shouting out on the farm, she wished to have him nice and little again ; and at once she could make him look as tiny as anything. Or when her grandchildren came, toddling along and she thought of their future -- lo and behold ! they walked into the magnifying-glass and looked grown-up and big, veritable giants.

But when summer came in she had the window opened ; for then the panes couldn't make the world outside look as beautiful as it really was. And on this Midsummer Eve, when it was at its most beautiful, she was looking out at the meadow and the trees when the dove took up his song. He sang sweetly, sweetly, of Jesus Christ and the joys and glories of heaven, and he offered welcome to all who were heavy-laden and had had enough of the tribulations of this life.

The old dame heard him, but she said ' No, thank you,' for to-day the earth was as beautiful as heaven itself, and she did not want anything better.

So the dove flew away over the meadow up on to the wooded hill where the farmer was digging a well. He stood deep down in the ground, with three yards of earth above his head, just as if he was in his grave.

The dove perched on a fir-tree and sang of

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the joys of heaven, knowing that that was what the man down there, from whose eyes sky, sea, and field were all hidden, would be longing for.

'No,' said the farmer. 'I must first dig the well; or my summer tenant won't have any water, and then the unhappy little lady and her child will have to go.'

The dove flew down to the shore, where the farmer's brother was drawing in his nets, and he perched on the reeds and sang.

'No,' said the farmer's brother. 'I must see that they have food at home, or the children will cry for hunger. Later on, later on. Plenty of time for heaven, Life first and death afterwards.'

The dove flew up to the big cottage, where the unhappy little lady lived in the summer-time. She was sitting on the veranda, machining; lily-white was her face under her red felt hat, which rested like a poppy on her black hair, black as crape. She was making a pretty pinafore for the little one to wear on Midsummer Eve; and the child sat on the floor at her feet, cutting up pieces of cloth she had got hold of.

'Why doesn't father come home?' asked the child.

That was the very question that the young mother herself could not answer; and probably the father, who was in a foreign land,

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nursing his sorrow, which was twice as great as the mother's, could not have answered it either.

The sewing-machine went badly, but it pricked and pricked, as many pricks as a human heart can bear before it bleeds utterly to death ; and every prick bound the thread more firmly—strange !

‘ I want to go to the village to-day, mother,’ said the child, ‘ and I want to see the sun ; it ’s so dark here.’

‘ You shall go to the sun this afternoon, my little child.’

True enough, it was dark between the high cliffs on this side of the island ; and the cottage stood right in the middle of black fir-trees, which hid the view even towards the sea.

‘ And then I want you to buy me lots of toys, mother.’

‘ We have so little to buy with, dear,’ answered her mother, bowing her head lower towards her breast.

That was the truth, for prosperity had changed to hardship ; they had no servants in the summer, and the mother had to do everything herself.

But when she saw the child's woeful face she lifted her on to her lap.

‘ Put your arms round mummy's neck,’ she said.

The little one did as she was told.

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‘ Give mummy a kiss.’

A little half-open mouth, like a baby bird’s, gave her one ; and the look that she got from those eyes, blue as flax-flowers, made the beautiful face of the mother reflect the frank innocence of the child, and she looked like a happy child in the sunshine herself.

‘ I won’t sing about heaven here,’ thought the dove ; ‘ but if I can help them, I will.’

And he flew to Sunny Hamlet, where he had business.

Afternoon came, and the little lady set out with her basket on her arm and her child by her side. She had never been to the village before ; but she knew that it lay towards the sunset, on the other side of the island ; and the farmer had told her that there were six fences with six gates before you got there.

Off they went.

At first there was a footpath over stones and the roots of trees ; so the little one had to be carried, and it was heavy work. The doctor had forbidden the child to put any strain on her left foot, for it was so weak that it might easily grow crooked.

The young mother bent under her burden of love ; and drops of sweat rolled down her face, for it was hot in the wood.

‘ I’m so thirsty, mummy,’ wailed the little girl.

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'Be patient, my love, and you shall have some water when you get there.'

And she kissed the dry little lips, and then the child forgot her thirst, and smiled.

But there was a blazing sun; and the air in the wood was motionless.

'You must try and walk a little now,' said the mother, putting the child down.

But the little foot gave way, and the child could not walk.

'I'm so tired, mummy,' she wailed, and sat down and began to cry.

But growing in the grass were the prettiest little rose-red bells, smelling of almond; and the child had never seen little flowers like that before; so she smiled again, and her mother plucked up heart to go on their way with the child in her arms.

They got to the first gate, and went through, carefully replacing the hank.

Then they heard a noise like loud neighing, and a riderless horse rushed up and planted himself in the middle of the path, shrieking; and his cry was answered from the wood on the right and on the left and all round; the earth echoed, branches creaked, and stones rattled. And they found themselves standing in the middle of a herd of untethered horses, with no father to protect them.

The child hid her face in her mother's

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breast, and her little heart beat like a watch with anguish. .

‘ I ’m so frightened,’ she whispered.

Then they heard a blackbird singing in the pine-trees, and lo and behold ! the horses at once ran off in different directions ; and all was quiet again.

So they passed the second gate, replacing the hank.

Here was a fallow field, and the heat of the sun was greater than it had been in the wood. There were long rows of grey clods ; but on one of the ridges they saw the clods suddenly begin to move, and turn into the backs of a herd of sheep.

Now sheep are good creatures, especially the lambs, but the ram is not to be trifled with ; he is a mischievous fellow, and given to attacking people who have done him no harm. And now he came right on to the path, jumping the ditch. He lowered his head and backed.

‘ I ’m so frightened, mother,’ said the little one, and her heart throbbed.

‘ O merciful God in heaven, help us ! ’ groaned the mother, looking up in prayer at the sky-blue vault.

As she looked she saw a little lark, poised hovering like a butterfly ; and when he began to sing the ram disappeared into the grey clods.

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So they reached the third gate. The ground began to fall now ; their feet got wet ; they were in a swamp. The tufts looked like little graves with white flowers on them, wool-flowers or cotton-blossom ; and one false step, would mean sinking into the mud. Black berries, which were poisonous, grew there, and the child wanted to pick them, but was not allowed ; and she was disappointed, for she did not know what 'poisonous' meant.

As they walked they saw a white sheet sweeping towards them through the trees ; the sun was hidden, and they were surrounded by a white darkness, which was uncanny.

Then out of the white stuck a head with a white face and two crooked horns, and the head bellowed. And more heads appeared, many heads, coming nearer and nearer.

'I'm frightened, mother,' whispered the child. 'I'm so frightened.'

The mother took a step sideways, and sank between two tufts into the bog.

'O God, great and merciful, have pity !' cried the mother, out of the depths of her soul.

Now they heard the wind, the strong sea-wind, coming through the wood ; the trees bowed humbly before the great spirit ; and a young pine-tree bent its head down and whispered something in the deserted woman's ear.

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She caught hold of a branch with one hand, and the pine straightened itself up and lifted her out of the slough of despond.

At the same moment the mist blew away ; the sun shone again, and they stood at the fourth gate. But the mother, who had lost her hat, dried the child's tears with her black hair ; and when that made the little one laugh, a light shone in the poor mother's heart, and she found renewed strength to reach the fifth gate. Then her heart lit up, for she saw red-tiled roofs and flags ; and along the path grew guelder-roses and dog-roses, two by two, just as if they were lovers, the white guelder-rose and the pink dog-rose.

The little girl could walk now ; and she filled the basket with flowers for her doll Lisa to sleep in on Midsummer Night and have beautiful dreams. •

So they went gaily on, light-hearted again ; for they had only a birch-copse between them and their goal. The road climbed a little hill ; and as they came up and bore to the right, there stood the bull in the middle of the road. •

It was impossible to run away ; and the mother fell on her knees in despair, laid her child on the ground in front of her, bent down her head to shield her with its long hair hanging like a black veil over her, and prayed a silent prayer with outstretched arms. From her

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forehead the sweat of agony dripped like red drops of blood on to the ground.

'O God,' she prayed, 'take my life, but spare the little one's.'

Then she heard the beat of wings in the air ; and when she looked up a white dove was flying into the village ; but the bull was gone.

Her first thought was for the child. The little one was sitting by the roadside, picking wild strawberries, as red as drops of blood ; and the mother knew where they had come from.

They went through the last gate, and walked into the village.

It lay in the sun beside a green creek, under big limes and maples ; the white church with its red steeple stood on a knoll ; the parsonage was buried in lilac and the post-office in jasmine, and the market-gardener's was under a great oak. It was all as gay as gay ; flags blew out ; little boats lined the shores and jetties, and you could see that it was Midsummer Eve.

But they met nobody. First they went to the shop to do their shopping, and get something for the little one to drink.

When they got there the shop was shut.

'I'm so thirsty, mother,' wailed the child.

They went to the post-office. It was shut.

'I'm so hungry, mother.'

The mother was dumb, for she didn't under-

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stand why they were shut on a week-day, and why there was nobody about. She went to the market-gardener's. It was shut, and a big dog lay in front of the door.

‘I'm so tired, mother.’

‘So am I, my child, but we must look for a drink of water.’

And they went from house to house, but everywhere was shut ; and the child could not walk any longer, for her little foot was tired and she limped. When the mother saw the pretty little body drooping sideways, she too grew tired and sat down by the roadside with the child in her lap. And the little one fell asleep.

Then a dove began to sing in the lilac-trees ; and he sang of the joys of heaven and the everlasting sorrow and torment of earth.

But the mother looked at her sleeping child, whose little face was framed in her bonnet of white lace like the petals of the white lily. And she felt she had heaven in her arms.

But the child woke and asked for something to drink.

The mother was still dumb.

‘I want to go home, mother,’ wailed the little one.

‘The same dreadful way back ? Neyer. I would rather go into the sea,’ answered the mother.

‘I want to go home.’

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The mother got up. Behind a knoll in the distance some young birch saplings had suddenly appeared ; and as she watched them the trees began to move forward. Then she realized that there were people there who had broken off branches of birch for midsummer arbours ; and she turned her steps thither in search of water. .

On the-way she noticed a little cottage inside a green fence with a white gate ; the door stood open, friendly and inviting. She went in through the gate and came to a garden with peonies and columbines in it. She noticed now that the window-blinds were down ; and all the blinds were white. But one window in the attic stood open, and a white hand appeared between two balsam plants, waving a little white handkerchief as if it was waving to some one starting on a journey.

She went up to the porch ; and there, in the long grass, lay a wreath of green myrtle-twigs and white roses. But it was too big to be a bridal wreath.

She stepped up to the door and asked if any one was in. .

When there was no answer she went into the cottage. On the floor, amid a forest of flowers, stood a black coffin with silver feet. And in the coffin lay a young girl with a bridal garland on her head. .

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The walls of the room were of new deal boards, only varnished, so that all the knots showed. And in their oval holes the dark bisected knots looked like the pupils of eyes.

The child was the first to notice the strangeness of the walls, and said :

‘ Look at all those eyes, mother.’

Yes, there were all sorts of eyes there ; big, eloquent, solemn eyes ; little, shining, children’s eyes with a smile in the corner ; angry eyes, which showed too much of the white ; open, watchful eyes, which searched into your heart ; and one big, gentle, mother’s eye, looking lovingly at the dead girl ; and in that eye hung a bright tear of resin, which glittered red and green like a diamond in the rays of the setting sun.

‘ Is she asleep ? ’ asked the child, who had now caught sight of the dead girl.

‘ Yes, she is asleep.’

‘ Is she a bride, mother ? ’

‘ Yes, she is a bride.’

The mother had recognized her. It was the girl who was to have been married at midsummer, when the sailor came home ; but the sailor wrote that he could not come till the autumn, and her heart broke ; for she did not want to wait till the autumn, when the trees had shed their leaves and the storms had begun to blow.

She had listened to the song of the dove and

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understood it. The young mother went out ; and now she knew where she must go.

She put down the heavy basket outside the gate and took the child in her arms, turning her steps out into the next meadow, which separated her from the shore. It was a sea of flowers, rustling and whispering round her white skirt and colouring it with every kind of pollen ; bumble-bees, honey-bees and butterflies rose on their wings and flew singing before them in one motley golden cloud. She walked down towards the shore with light steps.

Out in the creek she saw a white sailing-boat with sails spread, coming straight towards the jetty ; but there was no one at the helm. And she waded on, bathing in flowers and the smell of flowers, so that her white skirt looked like a flower-bed, but with far finer colours.

Down among the willows by the shore she stopped ; there was a bird's nest, wedged against the trunk of one of them ; and as the tree swung in the evening breeze it rocked three downy little chicks. The little girl immediately wanted to pat them.

'No, my child,' said the mother ; 'never touch a bird's nest.'

And just as they stood on the shingle the white boat came to shore right at their feet ; but there was not a soul in it.

She took the child and stepped on board

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And the boat at once turned and steered out of the creek. .

As they sailed under the headland on which the church stood all the bells began to ring, oh so gaily and joyfully !

And the boat glided out of the creek into the bay, where the open sea came into view.

The little girl was radiant with delight, for the water was blue and calm ; and it was no longer water they were sailing through, but flax-flowers, which the little girl picked with her outstretched hand.

And the flowers bent down and rose again like little waves whispering against the side of the boat. The field of flax seemed to spread out for ever in front of them ; but then they were wrapped in a white mist and heard the splash of real waves. And yet above the mist sounded the song of larks.

‘ How can larks sing out over the sea ? ’ asked the little girl.

‘ The sea is so green that the larks think it is a meadow, ’ answered the mother.

Now the mist scattered again ; the sky was as blue as a field of flax, and the larks rose higher.

Then, straight out to sea, they caught sight of a green island with a white beach, on which people in white clothes were walking hand in hand. And the setting sun lit up the golden

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roof of a colonnade with white fires burning under bowls of sacred offerings ; and the greer island was spanned by a rainbow of rose-rec and reed-green.

‘ What is that, mother ? ’

The mother could not answer.

‘ Is it heaven, that the dove was singing about ? What is heaven, mother ? ’

‘ It is a place, my child, where all people are friends, ’ answered the mother ; ‘ where there is no sorrow and no unrest. ’

‘ Then I want to go there, ’ said the child.

‘ So do I, ’ said the tired, desolate, afflicted mother.

The Big Gravel-Sifter

THE BIG GRAVEL-SIFTER

THERE was once an eel-pout who lay with her son at the bottom of the sea by the steam-boat jetty, watching a boy fixing his rod for fishing.

'Look at him,' said the eel-pout, 'and you will learn the wickedness and deceit of the world. . . . Look at him now; he has a whip in his hand: he throws out the line: there it is! Then, sinking down, comes the weight: there it is: and *then* comes the hook with a snake on it. You mustn't take *that* in your mouth, or you will be caught. It's only silly perches and roaches that are taken in. So now you know.'

But the forest of sea-weed, with its mussels and winkles, began to sway: there was a sound of splashing and drumming, and a big red whale darted past over their heads: he had a caudal fin like a corkscrew to work himself along with. .

'It's the steamer,' said the old eel-pout. 'Mind yourself.'

Then came a fearful din overhead, stamping and rumbling, as they made a bridge in two seconds between the boat and the land. But

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it was difficult to see; they were letting out soot and oil overhead.

There was something very heavy on the bridge, for it creaked under the weight; and some men joined in, singing:

‘Hea-ve!—Hoi-ee! Let her go!—Together hea-ve!—Hoi-ee!—Hey, ease her up!—Hoi-ee! Let her go!’

Then something quite indescribable happened. First there was a sound like sixty dalesmen splitting wood; then a hole opened, reaching right to the bottom of the sea, and between three stones stood a black cupboard, singing and playing and jingling and ringing right up against the eel-pout and her son, who made for deep water.

Then there came a voice overhead, shouting: ‘Three fathom of water. It’s no good. Let her lie; it isn’t worth while getting up the old vamp—it’d cost more to mend it than it’s worth.’ It was the Inspector of Mines, whose piano had fallen into the sea.

All was now quiet again; the big red fish swam out with its screw-fin, and it was quieter still. But when the sun had set, it began to blow; the black cupboard down in the forest of sea-weed swayed and bumped against the stones; and at every knock it played, so that all the fishes in the neighbourhood came swimming up to see and hear.

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The eel-pout was the first to come and look ; and as she could see her reflection in the cupboard, she said, ' It 's a wardrobe with a mirror.'

• That was logical, so they all said, ' It 's a wardrobe with a mirror.'

Up came a goby and smelt out the candlesticks, which had kept their place ; and there were still candle-ends, burnt down in the sockets. ' This is eatable,' he said, ' if it wasn't for the string.'

Up came a big cod and settled down on the pedal ; then there was a booming inside the cupboard, and all the fishes fled.

They got no further that day.

That night there was a half-gale, and the musical-box bumped on like a navvy's beetle till the sun came up. Then, when the eel-pout came back with the rest of the company, the cupboard had changed.

The lid had opened like the jaws of a shark, showing a row of teeth so big that they had never seen its like ; and every other tooth was black. And the whole machine had swollen out sideways like a spawner ; the boards described circles, the pedals pointed up into the air like a kicking foot, and the arms of the candlesticks were clenched like fists. It was an awful sight.

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'It's coming apart,' cried the cod, and put out a fin, ready to turn.

'It's coming apart,' they all cried.

And now the boards broke up, the box opened, and they could see what it looked like inside; that was the greatest fun of all.

'It's a trap! Don't go near it!' said the eel-pout.

'A hand-loom, that's what it is,' said the stickleback, who crochets his nest and understands that sort of thing.

'A gravel-sifter,' said the perch, who used to put up under the lime-works.

Yes, a gravel-sifter, that was what it was. But there were all sorts of tricks and catches that made it different from the sieve they sift gravel with. There were little gadgets like toes with white woollen socks, and when they moved, a foot with a hundred skeleton fingers started working; it worked and worked, but never got any further.

It was a queer body. But there was no more playing; for the skeleton couldn't get at the strings any longer; it flourished in the water, as if it was knocking with its knuckles to be let in.

There was no more playing! But a shoal of sticklebacks came and swam right through the cupboard. And when they drew their spikes over the strings it played again, but in a new

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way; for the strings were tuned differently now.

One rosy evening just afterwards, two children sat on the steamboat jetty, a boy and a girl. They were thinking of nothing in particular, perhaps some mischief or other, when suddenly they heard soft music from the bottom of the sea and became serious.

‘Can you hear?’

‘Yes. What is it? They’re playing scales.’

‘No, it’s the gnats singing.’

‘It isn’t. It’s the mermaid.’

‘There isn’t such a thing as a mermaid, my master at school says.’

‘He doesn’t know.’

‘Well, anyhow, listen.’

‘They listened for a long time and then went away.’

Two newly arrived visitors sat down on the jetty; he looked into her eyes, which reflected the whole of the rosy sunset and the green shores. Then they heard music, like the musical-glasses only in a new key, such as they alone had dreamt, they who wanted to create something new on earth. But it never occurred to them to look outside themselves; they thought the song was in their own hearts.

Then came two old visitors, who knew the

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trick ; and they amused themselves by saying in a loud voice :

‘ It ’s the piano of the Inspector of Mines—the one that fell overboard.’

But whenever new visitors came, who did not know the trick, they sat and wondered and revelled in the unknown music, till older visitors came and explained the trick to them. Then they no longer revelled in it.

But the musical-box lay there the whole summer through ; and the sticklebacks taught their art to the perches, who were better at it. The piano became a perch-bed for the visitors, the pilots put nets round it, and one day a waiter tried to fish cod in it. When he had let down his line with the old clock-weight on it and was going to pull it up, he heard a roulade in X flat, and the hook stuck fast. He coaxed and jerked and at last got up five finger-bones with wool on the end ; and the bones crackled like a skeleton. Then he was frightened and flung his catch into the sea, though he knew what it was.

Then came the dog-days, when the water got hot, and all the fishes went off into the deeps in search of cool. The music was silent again. But the August moon came, and the visitors held a regatta. The Inspector of Mines and his wife were there, sitting in a white boat, which was rowed gently to and fro

THE BIG GRAVEL-SIFTER

by their boys. As they rowed over the black water, silvered on the top, with a touch of dull gilding added, they heard music under the boat.

'Ha ha!' said the Inspector of Mines; 'that's our old vamp of a piano. Ha ha!' But there he stopped, seeing his wife bend her head low on her breast like the pelicans you see in pictures, as if she wanted to bite her bosom and hide her face. .

The old piano and its long history had wakened memories from the depths of her soul, memories of the first dining-room they had fitted out, of the first of her children who had learnt to play, of the long evenings whose weariness could only be driven away by the tempestuous rush of notes which made the whole flat shake off its apathy, which braced their hearts and set a new lustre on the very furniture. . . . But that is another story.

With the first storm of autumn the pilchards came in their thousand thousands and swam through the musical-box. It was a farewell concert with a vengeance; terns and sea-gulls gathered to hear it. And that night the musical-box went out to sea; and there was an end of the whole business.

The Sluggard

THE SLUGGARD

THERE was once a musician called Kreuzberg, who loved to sleep late both because he played in an orchestra in the evenings and because he drank more than one glass of beer before he went to bed. He *had* thought of getting up earlier, but it was a bad plan. If he went to see an acquaintance in the morning he found him asleep, if he wanted to put money in the bank it was shut; if he went out to borrow music at the music-shop it wasn't open, and if he wanted to take the tram it hadn't started to run; he couldn't get a cab so early, he couldn't even get his rappee snuff—he couldn't do anything so early. So he had gone on sleeping late, and he could do that to his heart's content.

Now he was fond of sun and flowers and children; but he could not live on the sunny side because of his delicate instruments, which would not keep their tone in sunny rooms. So he took a flat on the first of April—one that faced north. He made quite sure of that; he had a compass on his watch-chain, and he knew where the Great Bear was in the evening.

Well, then came spring, and it got so hot that it was a real blessing to live on the north

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side. The bedroom was next door to the dining-room; and he always kept the room he slept in pitch-dark with Venetian blinds; but there were no Venetian blinds in the dining-room, for they were not needed there.

Then came early summer with its greenery. The musician had eaten and drunk at Hasselbacken, and so slept like a top, especially as his theatre had closed that very day.

However, though he slept well, the room got so hot that he woke, or thought he woke, once or twice. Once he thought the wall-paper was on fire; but it might be the burgundy he had drunk. Once his face felt rather hot, and that was certainly the burgundy; so he turned over and went to sleep again.

At half-past nine he got up, dressed, and went out into the dining-room to refresh himself with a glass of cold milk, which always stood ready in the morning.

But it wasn't cool in the dining-room to-day; it was almost hot, too hot. And the cold milk wasn't cold; it was tepid, unpleasantly tepid.

The musician was not a cross-grained man, but he liked order in everything. So he rang for old Louisa, and, as he always made his remarks mildly for the first fifty times, he addressed her in a kind but rather firm tone when she stuck her head in at the door.

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'Louisa,' he said, 'you have given me tepid milk.'

'No, sir,' answered Louisa, 'it was cold, but it has stood and got warm.'

'You've gone and lit the fire, then; the room's hot.'

No, Louisa hadn't lit the fire; and Louisa retired to her corner in a huff.

It didn't matter so much about the milk; but when the musician looked round the room he was upset. In a corner by the piano he had built himself a household altar composed of a little table with two silver candlesticks, a big photograph of a young woman, and in front of it a tall champagne glass with a gold rim.

In this glass, his wedding glass—he was now a widower—he used to have a red rose standing every day as a memorial and an offering to her who had once been his life's sun. Winter and summer a rose stood there; and in winter it lasted a week, that is if he cut the end of the stalk and put a little salt in the water. Now yesterday evening he had put an absolutely fresh rose in the water, and to-day it was withered, shrunk, dead, with its head bowed on its breast. It was a bad sign. Of course he knew what a sensitive race these flowers are; and he had noticed the kinds of people with whom they thrived or did not thrive. He remembered how sometimes, when his wife

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was alive, her rose, which she always liked to keep on her little sewing-table, would not thrive but withered quite unexpectedly. And he had noticed that those were just the times when his sun chose to go behind clouds, which dissolved in drops to the accompaniment of oppressive rumblings. The roses wanted peace and loving words, and could not bear harsh accents. They loved music, and he would sometimes play to them till they opened their petals and smiled.

Now Louisa had a hard heart and used to go about grumbling to herself as she did the room. And she had savage days in the kitchen, when the sauce went sour and all the food had a flavour of discomfort which the musician could distinguish at once; for he was himself a fine instrument, and felt in his soul what other people cannot feel.

He guessed at once that Louisa had killed the rose; perhaps she had scolded the poor thing, or knocked the glass, or breathed spitefully over the flower, which could not bear such treatment. So he rang again; and when Louisa stuck in her head, he said, not unkindly but somewhat more firmly than before:

‘What have you done to my rose, Louisa?’

‘Nothing, sir.’

‘Nothing! Do you think the flower is

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dying of its own accord? Can't you see there's no water in the glass? You've spilt it.'

As Louisa was innocent she went out into the kitchen and cried; for it is unpleasant to be unjustly accused.

Kreuzberg, who couldn't do with other people's tears, let bygones be bygones and, bought a new rose that evening, a really fresh one; without wire of course, for his wife had never been able to bear that.

Then he went to bed, slept like a top, thought the wall-paper was on fire and the pillow was hot, but went to sleep again.

Next morning when he went out into the dining-room to perform his devotions at his household altar—alas! the petals of the rose had fallen from the stalk'. He was going to seize the bell-handle, but he stopped when he saw the portrait of her whom his soul had loved lying half rolled up and fallen at the foot of the flower-glass.

This was not Louisa's work. In his child-like mind he thought, 'She who was my all, my conscience and my muse, disapproves of me; what have I done?'

Well, when he examined his conscience there were, as there always are, small blemishes there; and he decided to wipe them out—by degrees, of course.

Then he had the portrait framed and glazed;

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and he put the rose under a glass cover, if that was any use, which was doubtful.

Then he went away for a week ; came home at night and went to bed. Woke as usual for a moment with one eye open and thought the lamp was alight.

When he came out into the dining-room it was downright hot, and how shabby everything looked ! The curtains were faded ; the cloth on the piano had also lost its colour ; the covers of the music-books were warped ; the paraffin in the hanging-lamp had evaporated and hung in a threatening drop under the ornament where the flies used to dance ; the water in the water-bottle was warm.

But most distressing of all ; her picture had faded too—yellowed like autumn grass. Then he was upset. And when he was really upset he took refuge in his piano or his violin, according to . . .

This time he sat down at the piano, with a vague intention of playing the sonata in E flat, Grieg's, of course, and her sonata, the best and greatest of all she knew, after Beethoven's in D flat ; not because E follows D, but because it was so.

But the piano would not obey to-day. It was discordant and troublesome, so that he couldn't believe his fingers or ears were in form. But it was not their fault. The piano was

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simply out of tune, dreadfully out of tune, though it had quite lately left the skilful hands of the tuner. There was something uncanny about it. It was bewitched.

• Then he seized his violin; and that needed tuning, of course. But when he tried to tighten the treble string the screw would not move; it was stuck fast. And when he used force the string snapped with a crack and rolled up like a dried eel-skin.

It was uncanny.

But that the picture should fade away was the most distressing thing of all; so he drew a veil over the altar.

That meant drawing a veil over the most beautiful part of his life; and the musician became moody and out of tune and gave up going out of an evening.

So it drew on towards midsummer. The nights grew longer than the days: but as the Venetian blinds kept the room dark the musician could not see any difference.

At last one night, Midsummer Night itself, he was wakened by the dining-room clock striking thirteen. That was ghastly, both because it is an unlucky number and because a clock in its right mind cannot strike thirteen. He did not go to sleep again now, but lay and listened. There was a ticking out in the dining-room, and then a report like furniture

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breaking. Immediately afterwards came a pattering along the floor and then the clock began to strike; and it struck and struck, fifty strokes, a hundred. It was ghastly.

Now a stream of light poured into the room and threw a figure on the wall-paper, a strange figure like a swastika; and it came from the dining-room door. So there was a light out in the dining-room. But who had lit it? And there was a tinkling of glasses, just as if guests sat there; champagne glasses of cut-crystal; but there were no voices. Now there were fresh sounds, as if sails were being lowered, or clothes mangled, or something of the sort.

The musician had to go out and look; so he committed his soul into the hands of the Almighty and went out.

He saw, first, Louisa's dressing-jacket disappearing through the kitchen door; then the blinds, drawn up; and the table full of flowers in glasses, oh, as full as it had been on his wedding evening when he came home with his bride!

And look! The sun, the sun, stared him right in the face, over blue bays and distant woods; it was the sun that had lit up the dining-room and played all the little tricks. And it was his birthday; and he blessed the sun for getting up so early in the morning and hoaxing the sluggard. And he blessed the

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memory of her he had called his life's sun. It was not a new name, but he couldn't find a better one and it was good enough. And the rose stood on his household altar and was quite fresh, as fresh as *she* was before she got tired of drudgery. Tired. No, she was not one of the strong sort; and life had been too brutal to her with all its blows and buffets. He could still hear her in his memory drop on to the sofa after she had been ironing or cleaning, and sigh, 'I'm tired.' Poor little thing, she did not belong here; she just played her part on the stage and then went her way.

And she needed sun, the doctor said; but they couldn't afford sun then, for sunny houses cost more.

But now he had had sun without knowing it, and he stood bathed in sun; but it was too late. Midsummer was past, and the sun would go away again; be gone for a year, and come back again. What a strange story!

The Pilot's Trials

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THE pilot cutter was tacking outside the last light; the winter sun had set long ago and a high sea was running, a real ocean sea. Then the man in the bows signalled: Sail to windward!

Out to sea appeared a brig with her yards braced aback and the pilot jack hoisted; she wanted to enter harbour, then.

'Look-out!' ordered the master-pilot at the wheel. 'She'll be difficult to make in a sea like this: but we'll go alongside her on the lee side, Victor, and you can throw yourself into the rigging anywhere you can get. . . . Bring her round! Right away!'

The cutter turned smartly and bore down on the brig, which lay pitching.

'Queer craft! Why don't they trim her full?—Can you see any light on board?—No!—And no lantern at the fore.—Full speed ahead!—Victor!'

The cutter came up at full speed: Victor stood on the windward gunwale; and the next time a high sea lifted the boat Victor was perched in the shrouds of the brig, while the cutter went on, turned, and bore down on the harbour light.

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Victor sat half-way to the cross-trees and got his breath before he climbed down on to the deck. When he got down he went straight to the helm, which of course was his place; but you may imagine his alarm when he found no one at the wheel. He hollaed, but got no answer.

'I suppose they're sitting drinking in there,' he thought as he walked to the cabin window. No, there was no one there. He went forward, to the galley and the forecastle, but there was not a soul there either. Then he realized that the vessel was deserted, and assumed that she was leaking and in a sinking condition.

Not till then did he look for the pilot cutter; but she had disappeared into the darkness.

To steer for land was impossible; to haul the braces, halyards, and tacks, and at the same time man the wheel was not to be thought of.

There was nothing for it but to let her drift, though she was drifting out to sea.

He didn't like it, but a pilot is prepared for anything; and no doubt a sail would pass him, if only he could get a light to signal with. So he went to the galley to look for matches and a lantern. Though the sea was very high he noticed no movement of the vessel, which surprised him. But his surprise increased when he got forward of the mainmast and saw

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he was walking on a parquet floor with a long carpet, which had a small blue-and-white check pattern. He walked and walked, but the carpet would never come to an end, and as for the galley there was no trace of it now. It was uncanny, certainly, but at the same time it was fun, for there was novelty in it.

The carpet had not come to an end when he found himself at the entrance to a passage with shops that were lit up. On the right there was a weighing-machine and a penny-in-the-slot machine. Without thinking what he was doing, he stepped on to the weighing-machine and put his copper in. As he knew he weighed eighty kilograms, he could not help smiling when the hand pointed to only eight. 'Either the machine's wrong, or I've got to another planet which is ten times as big as the earth, or as small,' he thought; for he had been to the school of navigation and done astronomy.

Now he would see what was in the automatic machine.

When his copper had dropped in, a shutter sprang up and a letter was pushed out of it into his hand. It was in a white envelope with a big red seal; but he could not read what was on the seal, and anyway it was of no importance, as he didn't know who it was from. However, he opened the letter and read . . . the signature first, as one always does. It was . . . well,

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we shall learn later on. Anyhow he read the letter three times, and then put it in his breast-pocket with a very thoughtful look on his face; very.

Then he went on into the passage, but now kept conscientiously to the middle of the carpet. There was every possible kind of shop there, but not a soul to be seen, either behind or before the counters. After a while he stopped in front of a big window in which there was a whole display of shells. As the door was open he went in. From floor to ceiling there were rows of shells of every kind collected from all the seas of the world. No one was in, but there was a ring of tobacco-smoke in the air, which looked as if it had just been puffed out by some one who had been amusing himself with blowing rings. Victor, who was a jolly fellow, stuck his finger through the ring and said, 'Hey! Now I'm engaged to Miss Baccy!' Then he heard a strange sound like a bell; only there wasn't a bell there; but instead he saw that it was a bunch of keys that was making the sound. One of the keys seemed just to have been stuck into the cash-box, and the other keys swung to and fro with the regular motion of a pendulum; and that went on for a while. Then it was quiet, and when it was quite quiet there was a soft sighing, like the wind passing through tackle or steam

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rushing through a narrow pipe. It was the shells sighing; and as they were of different sizes, the notes of the sighs had different pitches, and it sounded like a whole orchestra of sighs. Victor, who was born on a Thursday and so could explain the songs of birds, pricked up his ear to catch what they were sighing, and after a time he could make out what they said.

'I have the prettiest name,' said one; 'I'm called *Strombus pespelicanus*.'

'I *am* the prettiest,' said the purple mollusc, whose name is *murex* with something else funny added.

'I have the prettiest voice,' said the tiger mollusc, so called because it looks like a panther.

'Silence, silence, silence!' said the garden-shell. 'I'm the one that's bought most, for I am put round flower-beds in the gardens of country villas. They don't like me, but they have to have me all the same. And in the winter I live in the wood-shed in a basket.'

'What an awful crew!' thought Victor. 'They do nothing but sing their own praises.' And to amuse himself he took up a book that lay open on the counter. As he had his eyes about him he saw at once that it was at Page 240, and that Chapter 51 began on the left-hand side. There was a line out of Coleridge

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as the motto at the head of the chapter; and what it said struck him like a flash of lightning. With glowing cheeks and bated breath he read . . . well, we 'll talk about that later on; but it was not about shells—that much we can say at once.

He liked the place, however, and sat down, but not too near the cash-box, because that is a dangerous place. And then he began thinking about all those strange beasties that are at sea as he was; they are not hot at the bottom of the sea, but they sweat, and when they sweat lime it turns into a new jacket for them straight away. And they wriggle like worms; some wriggle to the right, and others to the left—but that is obvious, for they must wriggle in some direction, and they can't all be the same.

Then he heard a voice from the back shop, through the green curtains.

'Yes, we know that, but what we *don't* know is that the ear has a shell called a Helix, and that the little bones on the drum-head are exactly like the animal inside Limnaeus stagnalis—it's in the book.'

Victor, who understood at once that this was a thought-reader, answered genially but roughly, and without betraying the least surprise, also through the curtains.

'We know that, but *why* we have a Helix in

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our ears the book doesn't know, any more than you can tell me, Mr. Shell-dealer. . . .'

'I'm not a shell-dealer,' bawled the invisible voice from inside the back shop.

• 'What are you, then?' bawled Victor back.

'I'm . . . a goblin.'

With that the curtains were pulled apart and a head stuck out so terrible that any one but Victor would have taken to his heels. . But he knew how goblins should be treated; so he first looked at the red-hot pipe-bowl, for that was what the goblin looked like, blowing rings in the gap in the curtains. When a smoke-ring came near Victor, he took it on his finger and threw it back.

'Oh, you can throw rings, can you?' said the goblin scornfully.

'Rather!' answered Victor.

'And you aren't afraid either?'

'A sailor mustn't be, or no girl will be fond of him.'

'Look here, you who aren't afraid. Go a little further along the passage, and we'll see if you're not afraid then!'

Victor, who had had enough of the shells, took the opportunity of making off without seeming to run away, and walked out of the shop; but backwards, for he knew that you mustn't ever turn your back, because it's always more vulnerable than your chest.

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So he began his walk again, following the blue-and-white carpet. The passage wasn't straight but winding, so that you could never see the end of it; and there were always fresh shops there, but no people; and the shopkeepers were not to be seen.* But Victor, who had learnt from experience, knew that they were keeping inside their back shops.

Coming to a perfumer's, which smelt like all the flowers of the field and the wood, he thought, 'I'll go in and buy a bottle of eau-de-Cologne for my sweetheart.' No sooner said than done. The shop was quite like the shell shop, but the scent was so strong that he got a headache and had to sit down on a chair. In particular, there was a smell of bitter almonds, which made your ears buzz but left a fine taste in your mouth like cherry wine. Victor, who was never at a loss, picked up his brass box with a looking-glass on it, and took a pinch of snuff, which cleared his brain and took away his headache. Then he rapped on the counter, and shouted:

'Hullo! Is any one there?'

No answer came. Then he thought, 'Why not go into the back shop and settle up in there?' He put his right hand on the counter, gave a push, and with one spring was on the other side. Next he pulled the curtains apart and looked into the back shop. There he saw

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a sight which completely dazzled him. On a long table with a Persian cloth there was, first, an orange-tree with blossom and fruit, and its shiny leaves were like the leaves of the camelia. There were cut-glass vases arranged in rows with all the sweet-smelling flowers of the world, from jasmine, through tuberose, violet, lily-of-the-valley and rose, right down to lavender. At one end of the table, half hidden by the orange-tree, he saw two white little hands under the rolled-up sleeves of a dress, doing something with a silver style; the lady's face he could not see, and she could not see him either. But when he saw that her dress was yellow and green he knew she was a witch, for the larva of the hawk-moth, which can also deceive the eye, is yellow and green. His back looks as if it was his front, and he has a horn there like the unicorn's, so that he frightens his enemies with his sham face, while he eats with what looks like his back part.

Victor thought, 'Now for a tussle, but you begin.' Quite right; if you want people to talk, you just say nothing.

'Are you the gentleman who wants a house for the summer?' asked the lady, coming forward.

'Yes, I am,' answered Victor, for something to say. He had never thought of a house for the summer, in the winter.

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That put the lady out of countenance, but she was as beautiful as sin and threw a bewitching glance at the pilot.

'No, it's no use trying to bewitch me,' said the pilot. 'I'm engaged to a good girl.' And he looked at her between his ring finger and his second finger, as witches do when they want to silence the judge.

The lady was young and beautiful above, but from the waist downwards she was very old, as if she was patched together of two pieces.

'Well, let me see the place,' said the pilot.

'Step this way,' answered the lady, opening a door in the background.

They went out and found themselves in an oak wood.

'Straight through the wood, only, and we're there,' said the lady, and asked the pilot to go first, for of course she did not want to turn her back towards him.

'By the way, I suppose this is where the bull is,' said the pilot, who had his wits about him.

'Why, you're not afraid of the bull?' answered the lady.

'We may as well have a look at him,' decided the pilot.

They walked over rocks and tree-roots, bogs and clearings, felled trees and charcoal pits. Victor had to turn round every now and then

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and see if she was there, for he could not hear her steps; and even when he had turned round and had her in front of him his eye had to search for her, for her yellow and green dress made her almost invisible. "

At last they came to a gap or clearing in the wood, and as Victor stood in the middle of the green plot the bull came up as if he had been waiting. He was black, with a white blaze on his forehead and blood in the corners of his eyes.

As flight was impossible there was nothing for it but attack and defence. Victor threw a glance on the ground, and lo and behold! there lay a picket newly cut with a knob on the end. He picked it up and took his stand.

'You or me!' he gave the word. 'One, two, three!'

Now the fun began. The bull first backed like a steamer, let out steam through his nostrils, worked his tail like a propeller; and then went full speed ahead.

There was a whirring in the air and then a report like a shot as the picket caught the bull right between the eyes. With one leap Victor was out of the way, but the bull kept on at full speed. Then the scene changed; to Victor's utter terror he saw the beast making for the edge of the wood, where his girl, in a light dress, was hastening to meet her sweetheart.

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Then he cried from the bottom of his soul, 'Up into a tree, Anna! The bull's coming!'

And he ran after the beast and struck him on the hind legs in the thinnest place to smash one of the bones if possible. With a superhuman effort he managed to fell the monster to the ground. Anna was saved and the pilot held her in his arms.

'Where shall we go now?' he said. 'Home, I suppose?'

It did not occur to him to ask where she came from, for reasons we shall know later on.

They walked along the path hand in hand, and were happy at the unexpected meeting. But after a while Victor suddenly stopped and said:

'Wait a moment: I must go and see after the bull. After all, it's hard lines on him.'

Then Anna's face changed, and the corners of her eyes became bloodshot. With a savage, wicked expression she said simply, 'Go. I will wait.'

The pilot looked at her sadly, for he could hear that she was telling a falsehood. Then he went on with her. But how strange her walk was! He began to shiver all down his left side.

When they had gone on a little further Victor stopped again.

'Give me your hand,' he said. 'No, your left one.'

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Then he saw that her ring was not there.

'Where's your ring?' he asked.

'I've lost it,' she answered.

'You are my Anna, but you are not my Anna. A stranger has flown into you.'

At that moment she gave him a sidelong glance, and he saw that it was not the glance of a human being but the bloodshot glance of the bull; and he understood. . . .

'Aroint thee, witch!' he said, and spat in her face.

Then you should have seen! The false Anna began to change, went yellowish-green in the face like gall, burst with rage, and the next moment a black rabbit scurried away over the brambles and was gone, leaving Victor alone in the wilds of the wood. . . .

But he was not baffled. He thought, 'I may as well keep on; and if the old 'un himself comes I'll say the Lord's Prayer right through; that goes a long way.' . . .

So he kept on till he caught sight of a cottage. He knocked, and the door was opened by an old woman, whom he asked if he could have shelter for the night. The old woman answered that he could, but that it was nothing much—just an attic, which was only so-so.

'So-so or not, I must sleep now.'

Well, while they were arguing he managed to get up to the attic and into the bedroom.

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There was a big wasps' nest hanging over the bed, and the old lady apologized for having such guests.

'That's all right; wasps are like human beings, they're good till you annoy them. Perhaps you have snakes too?'

'Why, yes, one or two.'

'That's all right; they like the warmth of a bed; I dare say we shall get on very well together. Are they adders or common snakes? Of course I'm not particular, but I prefer common snakes.'

As the pilot began to get the bed ready, and showed that he definitely meant to sleep in the room, the old woman stood speechless.

Just then there was an anxious buzzing outside the closed window; a big hornet was trying to get in.

'Let the poor fellow in,' said the pilot, opening the window.

'No, the beast! Kill him!' screamed the old woman.

'Why? Perhaps he has children here who will starve, and then I shall have to lie listening to howling babies—no, thank you! . . . Come in, little hornet.'

But the old woman kept on: 'He bites!

'Oh dear, no; he only bites mischievous people.'

With that he opened the window. In

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sailed a hornet as big as a pigeon's egg ; and buzzing like a double bass he went straight up into the nest. And then all was quiet.

The old woman went, and the pilot crept into bed.

Next morning when he came down into the sitting-room the old woman wasn't there ; but a black cat sat on the only chair, purring ; you see, cats are doomed to purr, because they're so lazy, and they must do something.

'Get up, cat,' said the pilot. 'I want to sit down.'

And he took the cat and put it in the fireplace. But it was no ordinary cat, for the hair on its back began to give out sparks, so that the chips caught fire.

'If you can make a fire, you can make coffee as well,' said the pilot.

But a cat is made of such clay that it doesn't want what others want ; so it began to spit, and the fire went out.

Just then the pilot heard some one put down a spade against the cottage wall ; and when he looked out he saw the old woman standing by a hole she had dug in the garden.

'Oho ! So you're digging my grave, old lady,' he said.

At that moment the old woman came in. When she saw Victor safe and sound she was quite beside herself with astonishment ; and

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she now admitted that no one had come alive out of that bedroom, and that she had therefore dug his grave in advance.. As she was rather short-sighted she thought the pilot had got an extraordinary necktie on.

'Well, have you ever seen a necktie like this?' said Victor, stroking under his chin with his hand.

There sat a snake, who had made a fine knot with two spots on it; they were his ears; and his eyes shone like jewels.

'Show Auntie your tiepins,' said the pilot.

And when he tickled the snake on the head, there were the two tiepins right in his open mouth.

Then the old woman was amazed and cried :

'Now I see that you got my letter and understood it. You are a fine fellow.'

'Oh, it was *your* penny-in-the-slot letter,' said the pilot, taking the letter out of his breast-pocket. 'I'll have it framed when I get home.'

Do you know what was in the letter? Only this: 'Mann muss sich nie verbluffen lassen,' which may be translated 'Fortune favours the brave.'

When her mother finished the story like that, Anne-Marie asked :

'Yes, but how could the pilot go from the

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ship to the passage; and didn't he go back again afterwards, or had he only dreamt it all?'

'You shall hear that some other time, Miss Inquisitive,' answered her mother.

• 'Yes, but there were some verses in a book. . . .'

'What verses? Oh yes, the ones in the shell shop. . . . Yes, I've forgotten *them*.' But you mustn't ask questions like that; you see, it's only a fairy-story, dear.'

Photography. and Philosophy

PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY

THERE was once a photographer. He photographed like anything, profiles and full faces, three-quarters and full lengths, and he could develop and fix, tone, gold-bath, and print. He was a spanker ! But he was never satisfied, for he was a philosopher, a great philosopher and an inventor. He had philosophized the world topsy-turvy. You could see how it was from the plate lying in the developer. There the right-hand side of people was on the left ; what was dark became bright, shadows became lights, blue became white, and silver buttons as black as iron. It was topsy-turvy.

He had a companion, who was an ordinary man, full of little peculiarities. For instance, he smoked all day long ; he could never learn to shut doors ; he put his knife instead of his fork into his mouth ; he went into rooms with his hat on ; he cut his nails in the middle of the studio floor ; and he *would* drink three glasses of beer in the evening. He was full of faults.

The philosopher, who for his part was without faults, was irritated by his imperfect brother, and wanted to break with him, but couldn't, because their business kept them

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together; and as they had to keep together the involuntary feelings of the philosopher began to turn into unreasoning hatred. It was terrible.

Well, when spring came, they had to take a house for the summer; the companion was sent out to get one. He got one. They moved out one Saturday evening on the steamer. The philosopher sat on the upper deck all the way, drinking punch. He was very corpulent, and was troubled with several complaints, something to do with his liver, for instance; and he had something wrong with his feet, perhaps rheumatism, or what not. Well, when they got to the spot, they landed on the pier.

'Is it here?' asked the philosopher.

'Just a short walk,' answered the companion.

They walked along a path over tree-roots and it came to an end right in front of a fence That had to be climbed. Then came a path over stones. The philosopher complained of his feet, but the pain was soon put out of his head by a new fence, which had to be climbed Then the track disappeared of its own accord they had to walk on bare boulders and trample their way through undergrowth and brambles

Inside the third fence stood a bull, who chased the philosopher to the fourth fence

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which gave him a sweat-bath and opened his pores. After the sixth fence they saw the cottage. The philosopher went in, and came out on to the veranda.

‘Why are there so many trees?’ he said.
‘They hide the view.’

‘Oh, they’ll protect us from the sea-wind,’ answered his companion.

‘And the place looks like a churchyard: why, we’re right in the middle of a fir-wood!’

‘It’s healthy,’ said his companion.

Then they went to bathe. But there was no beach in the philosophical sense of the word. There were only pebbles and mud. After the bathe the philosopher wanted to drink a glass of water from the well. It was rusty-brown water with a pungent taste. It wouldn’t do. Nothing would do. Meat was unobtainable; fish was the only thing there was.

The philosopher became gloomy and sat down under a gourd to complain. But he had to stay: and his companion went back to town to look after the business during his friend’s holiday.

Six weeks had gone when the companion returned to his philosopher.

On the pier stood a slim youngster with red cheeks and a brown neck. It was the philosopher, rejuvenated and lusty.

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He jumped over the six fences, and drove the bull before him.

When they got to the veranda, his companion said :

‘ You look well : how have you got on ? ’

‘ Oh,’ said the philosopher, ‘ splendidly. The fences have taken off my fat, the stone have massaged my feet : the mud has provided me with mud-baths for my rheumatism : the simple diet has cured my liver, and the fir-wood my lungs : and—would you believe it?—the brown well-water contained iron, just what I wanted.’

‘ Yes, my philosopher,’ said the companion ‘ from the negative you get a print, where shades become lights again. If you would take a print of me and see what faults I haven’t got, you wouldn’t hate me. Just think : don’t drink spirits, and so I attend to the business properly : I don’t steal : I never speak evil of you : I never grumble : I never argue that white is black : I’m never rude to customers : I get up early in the morning : I cut my nails to keep the developer clean : I keep my hat on so as not to drop hairs on to the plates : I smoke tobacco to purify the air of poisonous vapours : I leave doors ajar because I don’t want to make a noise in the studio : I drink beer in the evening so as not to take to whisky, and I put my knife into

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ny. mouth, for fear of pricking myself with the fork.'

'You are indeed a great philosopher,' said the photographer: 'now we'll be friends, and we shall do well.'

A Half-Sheet of Paper

A HALF-SHEET OF PAPER

THE last load' of furniture had gone; the tenant, a young man with crape on his hat, was walking through the flat once more to see if he had forgotten anything. No, he had not forgotten anything, absolutely nothing; so he went out into the hall, firmly resolved never again to think of the life he had lived in that flat. Stop a moment: in the hall, by the telephone, there was a half-sheet of paper tacked up; and it was covered all over with different writings, some in clear ink, others scrawled in pencil or red chalk. There it was, the whole beautiful story that had been played out in two short years; all he wanted to forget was there; a piece of human life on a half-sheet of paper.

He pulled down the sheet; it was that kind of sun-yellow scribbling paper that shines. He put it on the mantelpiece, bent over it, and read. First came her name: *Alice*, the prettiest name he knew then, because it was his fiancée's. And her number—1511. It looked like the number of a hymn. Then came: *Bank*. That was his work, the sacred work that gave him bread, home, and wife, the foundation of existence. But it was

A HALF-SHEET OF PAPER

crossed out. For the bank had failed; but he had been rescued into another bank after a short time—a time of great anxiety, though.

Then the thing began. *Florist* and *Livery Stables*. That was his engagement, when he had his pockets full of money.

Then: *Furnisher*, *Decorator*: he gets his house ready. *Removal Contractor*: they move in.

Opera Box Office: 5050. They are newly married and go to the Opera on Sundays. Their best moments, when they sit silent, meeting in the beauty and harmony of the fairy-land on the other side of the curtain.

Here follows a man's name, crossed out. It was the name of a friend who had reached a certain height in society, but could not bear his good fortune, and had fallen past help and been obliged to go a long way away. So fragile is life!

Here something new seems to have entered their life. In a woman's hand, in pencil:

'*Mrs.*——.' Mrs. Who? Oh yes, of course, the woman with the long cloak and the friendly, sympathetic face, who comes so silently and never goes through the dining-room, but down the passage to the bedroom.

Under her name comes *Doctor L.*

Here for the first time the name of a relative crops up. *Mother*. It is his mother-in-law,

A HALF-SHEET OF PAPER

who has tactfully kept away so as not to intrude on the newly married husband and wife, but is now summoned in the hour of need, and comes gladly because she is wanted.

Here begins a big scrawl in blue and red. *Registry Office*: the maid has left, or a new one is to be engaged. *Chemist*. Hm! It looks black. *Dairy*. They order milk, sterilized.

Grocer, Butcher, etc. The house begins to be managed by telephone: the housewife is not in her place then. No: she is in bed.

What followed *he* could not read, for his eyes were blurred like the eyes of a man drowning in the sea, when he has to look through salt water. But it was: *Undertaker*. That speaks for itself. *One big and one small* ('coffin' understood). And in brackets was written: *ashes*.

That was all. Ashes it ended with; it does.

But he took the sun-yellow paper, kissed it, and put it in his breast-pocket.

In two minutes he had lived through two years of his life.

He was not bent when he went out: on the contrary he carried his head high, like a proud and happy man, for he felt that after all he had possessed the most beautiful thing there is. How many poor people have never had it!

*The Man who had a Triumph
and the Buffoon*

THE MAN WHO HAD A TRIUMPH AND THE BUFFOON

IT was that spring evening in 1880 which we Swedes never forget, because we celebrate it every year; and it was on Block-house Point the same unforgettable evening. An old couple stood there, country people, simple folk who had journeyed through the greater part of a life of drudgery together. They were gazing down the channel, which lay in darkness under the moist-eyed stars, watching a man busy with some obscure object out on the quay. For a long time they stood there, a very long time; now looking down the dark channel, now watching the blaze of lamplight from the town.

At last they saw a light out in the bay—two lights—many lights. Then the old people pressed one another's hands, and silently under the stars thanked the gods for giving them back their son, who had shared in the glory of the great feat of sailing round Asia, and who had been mourned for a whole year as dead.

True, he had not been^t the leader, but he had taken part; and now he was to be entertained by the King, to receive decorations.

THE MAN WHO HAD A TRIUMPH

and be given an appointment that would provide bread, to say nothing of the gratuity cash down already voted by Parliament.

The lights grew larger and came nearer; a little steamer was tugging a big black barge, which looked so simple at close quarters, just as many other great things are apt to do.

The man on the quay by the strange contrivance struck a match.

‘What can it be?’ said the old man. ‘It looks like huge great candles.’

And they went closer, to look at it.

‘It looks like a drying-yard for fishing-nets,’ said the old woman, who was from the coast.

Crack! Fizz! ‘Pop-pop-pop! And the old people stood wreathed in fire and flame.

Whole sheaves of flame shot up towards the stars in the sky, and lit new ones on high, so that if a star-gazer had seen them from an observatory he would have thought new stars had appeared in the firmament.

Something new did come, in heaven and on earth, in that year of 1880; new thoughts came into new minds, and new light, and new discoveries. Not but what tares also came with the new wheat, but tares must be there to give moisture and shade, and to be separated from the wheat at the harvest.

AND THE BUFFOON

Anyhow, there they are, because they go with wheat, just as chaff goes with grain.

It was a grand display of fireworks, 'at all events; and when the smoke had cleared—for smoke goes with fire—the show was over.

'It *would* have been nice to be in the town this evening,' said the old lady.

'Not it!' said the old man. 'We should only have been in the way, and poor folk who push themselves forward easily get a name for pride. Anyhow, we shall see the boy to-morrow, when he can get away from his sweetheart, who has a better right to it than we have.'

That was sensible of the old man; and old men ought to be sensible, for who else will be if they aren't?

Well, they went up to town!

Now we will see what was happening to their son. . . . He had been coast-surveyor on board, and had measured the depth of the sea and the height of the land and the apparent movement of the heavens; he could tell the time by looking at the sun, and a glance at the stars showed him how far the ship had travelled. He was a splendid fellow, and, what was more, he thought he had charge of heaven and earth, and that he measured out time and regulated the clock of Eternity.

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Now that he had been entertained in the King's house and had a star pinned on his coat, he naturally felt somehow superior to the others; he wasn't exactly haughty towards his poor parents or his sweetheart; but of course they thought he was, though they said nothing. And perhaps he was a trifle stiff, for he had a tendency that way.

Well, the big festivities in the capital were over, and now the University wished to pay its homage to the heroes on their return. So they went there.

Now students are not like other people; they spend their time reading books under the eye of Doctor Know-all, and therefore think they know more than any one else. And they are young, and therefore thoughtless and cruel.

After dinner, when the old doctors had made their sensible and respectful speeches in honour of the seafarers, the students were to have a rag procession in the evening.

The coast-surveyor sat on a balcony with his sweetheart, by the other big-bugs; the church-bells rang and guns were fired; there was trumpeting, drumming, flag-wagging and waving of handkerchiefs. Then came the procession.

First appeared the ship, seamen and all; then came walruses and polar bears and all

AND THE BUFFOON,

the rest of it, then came students dressed to represent the heroes. The Great Man¹ himself was there, with his fur-coat and his spectacles. Not exactly respectful, as you may imagine, and it was a doubtful compliment to be represented in that way. They meant well, anyhow. After him came one, and then another, all represented by dressed-up students.

Last came the coast-surveyor. It is true that he was not a handsome man, but a man needn't be, as long as he is a good coast-surveyor, or anything else good. But how they had caricatured him! They had chosen a veritable leering baboon of a fellow to fill his place. That was all right; but nature had given the surveyor one arm shorter than the other and they had put that in too. And that was an ugly thing to do, for a bodily defect is a thing you can't help.

But when the buffoon who was acting the observer came level with the balcony, he said something in the Skåne dialect, to make fun of the surveyor, because he came from Skåne. And that was a stupid thing to do, for every one speaks his own language, learned from his mother; and it should be honoured.

For all the spectators to laugh was only polite, since they had been amused gratis;

¹ Nordensköld. See p. 130.

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but for his sweetheart to be wounded to the heart was quite as it should be, for she did not like seeing her future husband ridiculed. An inward gloom and silence fell on the surveyor. All the joy of the festivities had vanished for him. But he could not show it or he would have been thought stupid, for not understanding a joke. But worse was to come. The buffoon came forward and performed a comic dance, a charade based on the surveyor's name, the surname he had inherited from his father and the Christian name he had received from his mother at his baptism; and it was sacred in his eyes and he did not wish ever to change it, though it was a little garish.

He wanted to get up and go, but his sweetheart held him back, and he sat where he was.

When the procession was past and over, one on the balcony got up, the Great Man went up to the surveyor's sweetheart, laid a friendly hand on her shoulder, and said, with his kind smile:

'They have a strange way in this country of honouring their great men. But we must put up with it.'

In the evening there were fresh festivities, at which the surveyor was again present, but his pleasure had all gone, and he felt as small as anything after the merciless ridicule he

AND THE BUFFOON

had been through—indeed he was smaller than the buffoon who had made such a hit as a comedian—and therefore he was depressed, anxious about his future, doubtful of himself. And wherever he went in the big garden he saw his caricature, for the buffoon was everywhere. And he saw his faults magnified—his pride above all—and his boastfulness mimicked; and the worst of it was that his secret thoughts and affections were laid bare.

For three tormenting hours he had been going through the audit of his conscience; and what no man had dared to say to him the buffoon had said. Well, it is good to know yourself; Socrates even calls it the highest good; and towards the end of the evening the surveyor had conquered himself, recognized his weaknesses in his heart, and determined to change.

He went past a group of people, and heard a voice behind a hedge.

‘It’s extraordinary how the coast-surveyor has changed for the better! Why, he’s quite a good fellow.’

That did him good to the bottom of his heart. But what rejoiced the depths of his soul was a word from his sweetheart:

‘You look so good this evening. It makes you beautiful.’

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Beautiful? It must be a miracle, and miracles don't happen nowadays; but he had to believe in this one, for he knew he was ugly.

At last the Great Man tapped on his glass and made a speech, which began something like this:

'When the Roman conqueror had his triumphal procession there was always a slave behind him on the car, whose business it was, during the acclamations of the Senate and People, to cry "Remember that you are only a man!" And beside the conqueror's horse walked a jester, who marred the triumph by his abuse, and degraded the character of the conqueror by his lampoons. It was a good old custom, for nothing is so dangerous to man as to think himself a god, and nothing so displeasing to the gods as human presumption. My young friends; we have come home from accomplishing a feat which has perhaps been exaggerated; no doubt the fumes of victory have risen to our heads, and therefore it was good for us to see your buffoonery to-day; not that I would envy the buffoon his part, or delude myself into giving you the credit for pure motives—far from it; but in any case I thank you for the somewhat strange welcome you have given us. It will teach me that I have still much to conquer, and it will always remind me, when I am

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tempted to let myself be made into a god, that I am only a man.'

'Hear, hear!' shouted the surveyor.'

And the festivities went on undisturbed in spontaneous mirth and jollity—undisturbed even by the buffoon, who had slipped shamefacedly away and disappeared.

So much for the surveyor and the Great Man. Now we will see what happened to the buffoon.

The buffoon, who had been standing by the table during the Great Man's speech, had received a glance from the surveyor, one of those glances like fiery darts which set alight a mighty fortress. And when he went out into the night he was possessed, as if his clothes had caught fire. He was not a good man. Buffoons and hangmen are certainly men like the rest of us, but they are not of our best. This one had many faults and weaknesses, as we all have, but he knew how to conceal them. Now a remarkable thing happened. From mimicking the surveyor all day, and under the influence of drink, he had got so deep into his part that he could not get out of it again; and as he had been displaying the surveyor's faults and weaknesses he had taken them on himself; and the aforesaid glance of the surveyor had rammed them down to the bottom of his soul,

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as the rammer rams home the charge. He was loaded with the surveyor, and so he began to bluster and talk big when he got out into the street. But this time he had bad luck. A policeman came and told him to be quiet. The buffoon replied with something funny in the surveyor's Skåne dialect. 'Would you believe it, the policeman, who happened to come from Skanø, took offence and carried the buffoon off to the station. Now it is just as hard for buffoons to understand what is serious as it is for the police to understand a joke; so the buffoon resisted the officer with violence, with the result that out came his truncheon—rap, rap, rap!

And he was dismissed.

Now you may think that that punishment was enough for him, but it wasn't. Far from feeling the better for his chastisement, the buffoon was embittered, and went out on the warpath like a Sioux Indian, to find some one to be revenged on.

Chance, or some one else, led his steps down Custom-House Street and into a lodging-house. Round a table sat farmers and millers drinking the Great Man's health by the light of a lamp. When they saw the buffoon they took him for the surveyor, and they were highly delighted when he condescended to drink a glass with them.

AND THE BUFFOON,

The surveyor's conceit now flew into the buffoon's magazine and exploded. He boasted about what he had done: how it had been he who had led the expedition; for if he had not measured the depth of the sea they would have run aground; and if he had not read the stars they would never have got home.

Smack! An egg hit the buffoon right between the eyes.

And the miller was saying:

'The surveyor's too big for his boots; we knew as much before, and he was the writer of that article in the paper making out that the Great Man is a humbug.'

Now the surveyor's other weakness flew into the buffoon, and he said what was not true:

'The Great Man is a humbug!'

That was too much for the farmers to swallow. They made an insurrection, and the buffoon was lashed with a cow-halter to a sack full of flour. His face was powdered with flour aimed to a nicety; and lines were drawn over it with the wick from the lamp. And while this was being done a mill-hand sewed him to the sack with a needle and pack-thread.

But that was not all. With the lantern at their head the crowd of farmers drew their cart with the flour-sack and the buffoon out

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into the street and up to the Great Square. And the buffoon was shown to the people, who laughed. Serve him right!

When he got free he went away by himself, sat down on a flight of steps, and cried. The great big fellow cried. One could almost have pitied him.

*When the Tree-Swallow came to
the Buckthorn*

WHEN THE TREE-SWALLOW CAME
TO THE BUCKTHORN

If you stand in the harbour where the steamers lie, and if you look out to sea, you will notice on your left a hill completely overgrown with green young trees; and behind it there is a big house built in the shape of a spider; for in the middle there is a round tower from which eight wings run out, just like the eight legs on a spider's body. Those who get into that house can't get out when they want to; and some people stay there for life. It is the gaol.

In Oscar the First's time the hill was not green. On the contrary it was grey and cold, for nothing grew there, not even moss or heart's-ease, which usually thrive on bare rocks. There was only grey stone, and grey men who looked as if they had been turned to stone, hewing stone, blasting stone, and carrying stone. Among these stone-age people there was one who looked more petrified than the others. He was a young fellow in Oscar the First's time, when he was shut up in his prison because he had killed a man.

He was sentenced to penal servitude for

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life, and on his grey clothes was sewn in black letters L.F.¹

Winter and summer he was out on the hill, breaking stone.* In the winter the harbour was desolate and empty. The semi-circular boom gaped with its piles like a row of teeth, and now he could see the wood-shed, the riding-school, and the two gigantic limes, bare of their leaves. Sometimes an ice-yacht came sailing past the island; sometimes a few boys skating. But usually the place was solitary and silent.

When summer came it cheered up. Then the harbour was fringed with neat boats, newly painted and beflagged. Then the limes grew green under which he had sat as a child, waiting for his father, who was the engineer on one of the finest of the steamers.

He had not heard the wind blowing through trees for many years, for nothing grew on his rock; but that sighing in the limes on Riddarholmen lived in his memory as the one thing he longed for.

If a steamer came past the island on a summer's day, he heard the lapping of waves, and perhaps band music; he saw happy faces, which darkened when they noticed the stone men on the hill.

¹ L.F. stands for 'Livtids fånge,' which is the Swedish for 'Life Prisoner.'

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Then he cursed—cursed heaven¹ and earth, cursed his fate and the cruelty of men. He had cursed thus year in and year out, and his comrades and he had cursed² and tormented one another night and day ; for crime separates, whereas misfortune unites the sufferers.

At first life was needlessly cruel, and the warders ill-treated the convicts, wantonly, unmercifully.

But one day a change took place : the diet improved, the treatment became gentler, and every prisoner was allowed a room of his own to sleep in. It was the King himself who had eased the bonds of the prisoners a little ; but as hopelessness had turned the hearts of these unhappy men to stone they could not feel anything resembling gratitude, and they continued to curse ; and they now discovered that it was nicer sleeping in one room, for then one could talk at night. And they grumbled at the food, at their clothes, at the warders, exactly as they had done before.

One fine day all the bells in the town rang, and especially those on Riddarholmen. King Oscar was dead, and the prisoners got a holiday. Being able to talk to one another they talked of trying to escape, of how they would strike the warder dead ; and they also talked of the dead king³ ; and they talked evil of him.

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'He would have let us out if he had been just,' said one prisoner.

'Or shut up all the sinners who go free.'

'Then he would have had to be governor himself, for the whole nation would have trooped in.'

'Convicts are like that; they think every one is a sinner, and that they were caught because they had bad luck.'

Well, anyhow, it was a hot summer day when the stone-man walked about on the beach listening to the bells ringing out the life of Oscar the Merciful. He looked for miller's-thumbs and sticklebacks under the stones by the shore; but there were none; and out in the water there was not even a roach to be seen; consequently there were no gulls or terns either. Then he realized the curse that rested on the place, which the very fishes and birds would not approach. And he thought over his fate once more. He had lost his name, Christian name and surname alike, and was called Number 65. A name spelt with figures instead of letters. He was not on the parliamentary register, did not pay taxes; did not know how old he was. He was no longer a human being, no longer alive; but not dead either. He was nothing. Just a grey object crawling on the hillside, with the fearful heat of the sun descending on his

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clothes, and on his head with its cropped hair, which had once been in locks, tooth-combed every Saturday by his mother's soft hand. He was not allowed to wear a cap to-day, because then it would have been easier for him to get away. And when the sun poured down on his head he remembered a story about the prophet Jonah, who was given a gourd by the Lord, that he might sit in its shade.

'I *don't* think!' he sneered; for he believed in nothing good, absolutely nothing.

Just then he saw a big branch of birch leaves rolling in the surf. It was quite green, with a white stem, and had perhaps fallen off a pleasure-steamer. He pulled it ashore, shook the water off it, and took it right away to a crevice in the rock, where he propped it up between three stones. And he sat down under the birch and listened to the wind blowing softly in the leaves, which smelt of the finest resin.

When he had sat in the cool for a moment, he fell asleep.

And he dreamed.

The whole hill was a green grove of lovely trees and sweet-smelling flowers. Birds sang, bees and bumble-bees buzzed, and butterflies fluttered. But apart by itself stood a tree which he didn't know; and it was more

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beautiful than the others, for it had several stems, like a bush; and its branches made delicate twists and curves like crochet-work. And under its glistening leaves sat a little black-and-white bird, which was like a swallow and yet wasn't one.

And, as it was a dream, he could interpret the song of the birds, so he heard and partly understood what this one was singing. It sang 'Mud, mud, mud, mud, cheap! Up, up, up, up, leap! In mud, mud, mud, died you! From mud, mud, mud, uprose you!'

It was about mud, death, and resurrection; he understood that much.

But the dream went on. He stood on the rock alone in the burning sun, parched with thirst and hunger.

All his comrades had driven him away and threatened his life, because he would not join them in setting fire to the prison. They gathered in a mob behind him and hounded him out on to the hill with stones, as far as he could go. And now he was stopped by a wall.

He saw no possibility of climbing it; and in his despair he decided to rush at it head first and so do himself to death.

He rushed down the mountain; and lo! that very moment a door opened, a green garden door . . . and . . . he awoke.

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When he thought over his situation and saw that the lovely grove had shrunk to the birch-tree branch, his mind grew discontented, and he said to himself:

‘ It might at least have been a lime ! ’

And as he listened he discovered how harsh the song in the birch leaves was ; it sounded like some one sifting sand from gravel : whereas lime-trees could play velvet-soft notes on your heart-strings.

On the next day the birch was withered and gave little shade.

On the day after that the leaves were as dry as scraps of paper, and chattered like teeth. And in the end there was a big bare birch branch standing in the crevice of the rock and reminding him exactly of his childhood.

Then he thought of the prophet’s gourd again, and he cursed when the sun poured down on his head.

A new reign had begun, and new vigour pervaded the government and administration of the country. And a new channel was to be made into the town. So the convicts were ordered out on lighters to dredge.

It was the first time for many, many years he had left his rock. And he went on the water again, and saw ever so many new things in his native town ; above all the railway and

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the steam-engine. It was just below the station that they were to dredge.

Well, they began to heave up all the rubbish at the bottom of the sea. Up came drowned cats and old shoes, rotten fat from the candle-factory, colour-fibre from the Blue Hand Dye-works, tanner's bark from the Tannery, and every kind of human abomination that had been rinsed out by washerwomen for a hundred years from the wash-house jetty.

There was a smell of sulphur and ammonia so intolerable that only a convict could stand it.

When the lighter was full, the convicts wondered where all this filth was to be shot. They had their answer when the boatman steered for their own rock.

There all the mud was unloaded and thrown on the hill, where the air was soon polluted. They waded in filth, and they filthed their clothes, hands, faces.

'This is hell!' said the convicts.

For some years they dredged and unloaded on to their rock until it was quite covered.

The white snow of winter fell at the end of each autumn, drawing a coverlet like a white sheet over all the abomination.

And when the last spring came, and the snow melted, the cruel smell was gone, and the mud began to look like earth. That

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spring the dredging came to an end, and our stone-mah was put to work in the blacksmith's shop, so that he never got out on to the rock now. But one day in the autumn he slipped out and saw a strange sight.

Plants were growing on the dredged mud. True, they were ugly, rank plants. The commonest was the one called bur-marigold, like a nettle but with brown flowers, which is ugly, for flowers should be white, yellow, blue, or red. There were also real nettles with green flowers, and burdocks, sorrel, thistles, and pigweed; all the ugliest, burning, stinging, stinking plants unloved of man, which inhabit dustyards, the ruins of houses that have been burnt down, and dredged filth.

'We made the sea clean, and they gave us the dirt,' said the convict. 'There's gratitude for you!'

Then came a time when he was taken to a new rock, which was to be made into a fortress; and he worked in stone again—stone, stone, stone! .

There he lost one eye, and was flogged every now and then. And he was so long there that the new King died and had a successor. On the Coronation Day a convict was to be pardoned and released. And the one who had conducted himself best, and also come to realize that he had done wrong, was

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pardoned. So much for him. But the other convicts thought they had been wronged; in their circles it was felt that he was a poor creature for repenting of 'what a man can't help.'

Again years went by. Our stone-man was now very old, and, being too decrepit for heavy work, he was sent back to his rock to sew sacks.

One day the chaplain came and stood by the stone-man as he sat sewing.

'Well,' said the chaplain, 'when will you get away from here?'

'How can it be done?' answered the stone-man.

'When you come to see that you have done wrong.'

'Show me a man who does more than right, and I will believe I've done wrong. You can't. No one will ever be able to.'

'More than right. That's loving-kindness. May you know it soon!'

One day the stone-man was ordered out to make roads on the rock, which he had not seen for perhaps twenty years.

It was summer again, a warm day, and the steamers buzzed happily past, as gay as butterflies.

When he got out on to the headland—there was no cliff to be seen, but a lovely green grove

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whose leaves glittered in the wind like the ripples on a lake. There were tall white birches and quivering aspens, and on the beach stood alders!

It was like his dream. And under the trees the grass whispered and flowers nodded, and there were bumble-bees flying about and butterflies fluttering. And birds of all sorts sang there, but he could not interpret their songs, which showed him that it was not a dream.

The hill of cursing was turned into blessing, and he could not help thinking of the prophet and the gourd.

'This is grace and loving-kindness!' said some one inside him; a voice, or a message, or whatever you like to call it.

And when a steamer went past the faces did not darken, but lit up at the sight of the beautiful verdure—why, he even fancied that some one waved, as you do when you go past a holiday house-party.

He went down a path under the whisper of the trees. True, there were no lime-trees; but he did not dare to wish for a lime-tree, lest the birches should turn into bare branches. So much he had learnt.

And as he went on down the leafy path, he saw afar off a white wall with a green barred gate. And he heard something playing which

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was not an organ; for it was gayer and quicker in movement. Above the wall rose a beautiful roof, and on it was a blue and yellow flag waving in the wind.

And over the same wall he saw a gaily coloured ball rising and falling; fragile little voices were chattering, and the clatter of plates and glasses told him that a table was being laid.

He went up to the gate and looked. . . . There were lilacs in bloom, and under them a table was being laid; children were playing, there was music and song.

'This is paradise!' said the voice to him.

He stood long and looked; so long that the poor old man collapsed from weariness, hunger, thirst, and all the ills that flesh is heir to.

Then the gate opened, and a brightly dressed little girl came out. She carried a silver tray, and on it stood a glass of wine—the reddest he had ever seen. And the child went up to the old man, straight up to him, and said:

'Here you are, old man; here's some wine for you.'

The old man took it and drank. It was the rich man's wine, and came from the lands of the sun far away; and it tasted of the sweetness of good life, when it is at its best.

'This is loving-kindness!' said his own

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broken old voice. 'But you wouldn't have brought me drink in your ignorance, child, if you had known who I am. Do you know who I am?'

'Yes, you're a convict, of course,' answered the girl.

'You knew. And yet . . . This is loving-kindness.'

When the old stone-man returned he was no longer made of stone. Something had begun to grow inside him too.

And as he rounded a cliff, he saw a tree with many stems like a bush. It was the most beautiful of all the trees, and it was a buckthorn, but the old man didn't know that. In the tree hovered a restless bird, black-and-white like a swallow; the people call it a tree-swallow, though that is not its name. And it sat right in among the leaves, and sang sadly, sadly, but gently.

'In mud, mud, mud, died you!'

'From mud, mud, mud, uprose you!'

It was the dream over again; and now the old man understood what the tree-swallow had meant.

The Mystery of the Tobacco-Shed

THE MYSTERY OF THE TOBACCO-SHED

THERE was once a girl at the Opera House. She was beautiful enough to make people turn round in the street, and she sang better than most.

The conductor-composer came and offered his kingdom and his heart. She took the kingdom, but left the heart.

She was great now, greater than any one else. And she drove through the streets in a victoria, nodding at her portrait, which was in all the book-shop windows.

She became greater still, and got on to postcards, soaps, and cigar-boxes. Finally her portrait hung in the foyer among those of the immortal dead; and then she became, to put it baldly, exceedingly puffed-up.

One day she stood on a pier out by the beach; the sea was rough and the current strong. The conductor stood by her side, of course, and many other young gentlemen too. The beauty was playing with a rose; and all the gentlemen wanted it; but no one might have it who couldn't get it.

Then she threw the rose right out among the waves. The young gentlemen looked at the flower for a long time; but the conductor

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jumped straight into the sea, swam like a gull over the waves, and had the flower between his lips in a twinkling.

There was a roar of applause from the pier; and the man lying in the sea saw in her eyes that she loved him. But when he tried to land he could not make any headway. There was a current with a backwash, but the woman on the pier didn't realize that; she thought he was playing, so she laughed. But the man who felt the danger of death upon him misunderstood her laugh, which was not a pleasant one; he felt a sting in his heart, and his love came to an end.

Still, he got ashore with bloody hands, which he had torn on the pier.

'You may take my hand,' said the beauty.

'I do not want it,' answered the conductor; turned, and went away.

That was treason against beauty, and therefore he must die.

How it happened that the conductor lost his post is known only to the theatrical people, who understand these things. He clung to it, and it took two years to shake him off.

But he fell; and when she had got rid of her benefactor she triumphed, and got still more puffed-up, till it began actually to show. And the public saw through her paint that her heart was cruel; so they could no longer

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be touched by her singing, and did not believe in her tears or smiles.

She noticed it, and grew bitter. She still ruled the theatre; strangled all those who were growing up, and had them hacked down in the newspapers.

She lost her popularity, but power was dearer to her; and being rich, powerful, and contented, she was in clover. People who are in clover do not at any rate get thin, but rather have a tendency to grow fat; and she really began to get somewhat corpulent. She began so slowly and cautiously that she did not notice it herself till it was too late. Bang! You go downhill fast, and this descent took on a dizzying speed. The torture she inflicted on herself did not improve matters. Her fare was the daintiest in the town, but she had to starve; and the more she starved the fatter she got.

In a year she was out of the running, and her salary was reduced. In two years she was half forgotten, and replaced by younger women. In the third year she was dismissed; and then she rented a room in an attic.

'Unnatural fatness,' said the stage-manager to the prompter.

'It wasn't fat,' said the prompter. 'It was conceit.'

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She sat in her attic and looked down on a big plantation. There was a tobacco-warehouse there, and she grew fond of it, for there were no windows in it where people could sit and look at her. And sparrows nested under the tiles; but tobacco was never hung in it, for no tobacco was planted there.

The whole summer she sat thus, looking at her shed and wondering what it was for; because the doors were shut with big padlocks, and she saw no one going in or out. That it concealed some mystery, she guessed; and she was soon to see what the mystery was.

There were still two straws of her forgotten fame to which she clung, and which kept her alive: they were her star parts, *Carmen* and *Aïda*, which were still vacant, because a successor could not be found for her; and her presentation of them, which had been excellent, still lived in the memory of the public.

Well, August came; the lamps were lit again, and the theatres were preparing to open.

The singer sat in her window, looking down at the shed, which had recently been painted red and re-tiled.

A man came striding through the potato-beds; and he carried a big rusty key. He opened the shed and went in.

Then came two more men, whom she

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thought she recognized; and they too disappeared into the shed.

This was getting interesting.

After a time the three men came out, carrying big, strange objects, like the bottoms of beds or partition screens.

Outside the door they turned the screens over and put them down leaning against the barn wall; lo and behold, there was a stove, but it was painted, badly painted. Next came the door of a rustic house, perhaps a forester's hut. Then a wood, a window, and a library.

They were theatrical decorations. And after a time she recognized the rose-bush in *Faust*.

It was the property storehouse for the Opera, and by that rose-bush she herself had once sung 'Little flower.'

It made her poor heart ache when she saw that *Faust* was to go on; but there was one comfort: she had not taken the leading part, which is of course Margaret.

'Never mind *Faust*. But if they touch *Carmen* or *Aida*, I'm a dead woman.'

She sat there watching the programme change: and she knew a fortnight before the papers what the Opera House was going to give. It was quite fun! She saw *Der Freischütz* taken out, wolf-gorge and all; she saw

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The Flying Dutchman, with its ship and sea; *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* and many others.

But one day it came, for the inevitable must come. The men tugged (one of them was called Lindkvist, she remembered, and managed the pulleys); and along came a square in Spain. The screen was tilted, so that she could not rightly see what it was; but one of the men gently rocked the frame, and as he moved it she saw the back, which is always ugly. And there, in black letters, which appeared one by one, slowly as if to torture her, was written, irrevocably and unmistakably: C, A, R, M, E, N. It was *Carmen*.

'Now I shall die,' said the singer.

But she did not die, poor thing, not even when *Aida* came out. Still, her name was wiped from the memory of men, from the book-shop windows, from the postcards; and finally her portrait vanished from the foyer in some mysterious way.

She couldn't understand how people could forget so soon; it was absolutely inexplicable. But she mourned for herself as one mourns for the dead; and the singer, the celebrity, was indeed dead.

One day she was walking alone down a deserted street. There was a dump for rubbish there. She stopped without thinking of anything in particular, but she got a perfect

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picture of annihilation; for on the rubbish heap was a postcard, and on it was her picture as Carmen.

She went away quickly with a weeping heart. Entered a cross-street, where the window of a little book-shop made her pause; she always stopped by these windows to see if she was hung up in them. She was not hung up here. On the contrary there was a placard on which against her will she read the remarkable words: 'The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.'

Them that do evil! That was why her memory was cut off. That was the explanation of the forgetfulness of men.

'But can't evil be turned into good again? Haven't I suffered punishment enough?' she cried in her bitterness.

She went out into the woods, where there was nobody. As she walked, desperate, prostrate, humbled, she saw another solitary mortal standing in front of her. And his eyes were asking if he might speak to her.

It was the conductor. But his eyes had no reproaches to make against her, no humiliating sympathy; they spoke admiration, amazement, and tenderness.

'How graceful and beautiful you've got, Hannah!' said his mouth.

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She looked at herself and saw that it was true. Grief had burnt away her unnecessary, puffed-up flesh, and she was lovelier than ever.

‘And you’re just as young as ever! Younger!’

They were the first kind words she had heard for ages; and as they came from the man she had used so ill she understood what a good man was worth, and she said so.

‘Is your voice still left, Hannah?’ asked the conductor, who couldn’t bear compliments.

‘I don’t know,’ she sobbed.

‘Come up to the singing-room to-morrow . . . yes, to me at the Opera House; we will see. You know, I’ve been taken on again.’

The singer came; came again; and recovered her old position.

The public had forgiven and forgotten, forgotten the evil; and now the singer is as great as ever she was, or rather much greater.

What an improving story!

Legend of Saint Gotthard

LEGEND OF SAINT GOTTHARD

IT is Saturday night at Göschenen in the Canton of Uri, one of the four original cantons, William Tell's and Walter Fürst's. Göschenen lies on the north side of the St. Gotthard, where the German tongue is spoken, and quiet, sociable folk live, who have the right to manage their own affairs for themselves; and where the Sacred Wood stands as a protection against avalanches and falling rocks; a green village beside a stream which drives the mill-wheel and is full of trout.

This Saturday, while the evening bell is ringing the Angelus, the village people collect at the well under the big walnut-tree. Here come the postmaster, the magistrate, and even the colonel, all in their shirt-sleeves and with scythes on their shoulders. From the day's haycutting they come, to wash their scythes, for here work is honoured, and if you want a thing well done you should do it yourself. Next come the boys, with their scythes too, and after them the girls with their milk-pails; and the last to arrive are the home-bred cows, of that giant race every one of whose cows is as big as a bull. It is a rich land, and a land of promise; but the vine does not grow

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there on the north side of St. Gotthard, nor the olive either, nor the silk-tree, nor the luxuriant maize. Green grass and golden corn, the tall walnut-tree, and the rich mangold—these are the products of the country.

The 'Golden Horse' Inn stands by the well under a precipice of the St. Gotthard; and in its garden round a single long table the tired harvesters now sit down after the day's labour, all at the same table, regardless of rank or precedence: the magistrate, the postmaster, the colonel, and the farm-hands too; the manufacturer, who makes straw hats, and his workmen, the little village shoemaker, the schoolmaster, and all the rest of them.

They chat about the hay crop and the milking; and they sing together songs that ring in simple chords like the herdsman's horn and the cow-bells. They sing of spring and its pure delights, and their melodies are as green as loyalty and as blue as hope.

And they drink yellow ale.

Then the young people get up to play, wrestle, and jump; for to-morrow is the shooting-match and sports, and woe to him who is not active then!

And for the same reason the tattoo was sounded early on the horns that evening, so that no one might come to the festivities

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drowsy from lack of sleep, when the honour of the village was at stake.

Sunday came in with the ringing of bells, and sunshine; people in their holiday clothes collected from neighbouring villages, and they all looked as if they came fresh from a good night's rest. Almost all the men had exchanged their scythes for rifles; the girls and the married women gave them searching and encouraging glances, for it was for house and home they had learnt to shoot; and the winning marksman knew that he would be allowed to open the dance with the most beautiful girl of the year.

Now came a huge hay-cart drawn by four spirited horses and decked in ribbons and flowers; and the whole cart was one leafy arbour with seats inside it. The people in it were not to be seen, but you could hear singing, beautiful high-pitched song, of Switzerland and the Swiss people, the comeliest and bravest people in the world.

Then came the children's procession; they walked in pairs, hand in hand, as if they were good friends or little brides and bridegrooms.

And when the bells began, they all streamed up towards the church.

But when the service was over the festivities began; and on the rifle-range, which lay up

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against the great precipice of St. Gotthard, the report of rifles could soon be heard.

The postmaster's son was the crack shot of the village, and there was no doubt that he would win the prize. He shot his series, and got four bulls out of six shots.

But then a halloping and thundering came from the mountain top; stones and gravel rolled down the steep, and the fir-trees of the sacred protecting wood rocked as if before a storm. Soon, on a crag, with rifle on shoulder and waving hat, appeared the wild chamois-hunter Andrea, from Airolo, the Italian village in the Canton Ticino on the other side of the range.

'Do not go into the wood!' shouted all the marksmen.

Andrea did not understand.

'Do not go into the Sacred Wood. The mountain will come down on us,' yelled the magistrate.

'Let it come then!' answered Andrea, and rode at a furious speed down the precipice. 'And here I am.'

'You are too late,' answered the magistrate.

'I have never been too late,' Andrea rejoined; and going to the range he threw his rifle six times to his cheek, and took six bulls.

Now he ought to have been the winner;

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but the guild had its laws, and they did not like the swarthy Latin folk on the other side of the mountain, where the vine grew and silk was spun. It was an old feud, and Andrea's shots could not be counted.

But Andrea went up to the beauty of the day, who was the magistrate's own daughter, and courteously asked her to open the dance of the evening with him.

The beautiful Gertrude blushed, for she had a mind to Andrea; but she must of necessity refuse his offer.

Then Andrea's face darkened, and, leaning forward, he whispered in her ear, which went blood-red:

'Mine you shall be, if I have to wait ten years. I have been eight hours crossing the mountain to come to you, so I was late; but when I come again I shall be in time, if it means coming right through the mountain.'

The festivities were over, and the dance too. All the marksmen sat outside the 'Golden Horse,' and Andrea was there too; but Rudi, the postmaster's son, sat on the high seat, for he was the master-marksmen—according to the rules, of course; Andrea was, really.

Rudi wanted to pick a quarrel.

'Well, Andrea,' he said, 'you are a fine shot; but you know shooting at the chamois is not the same thing as getting it.'

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‘If I shoot at it, I get it,’ answered Andrea.

‘Very pretty! Every one has shot at Barbarossa’s ring, but no one has got it,’ rejoined Rudi.

‘What is Barbarossa’s ring?’ asked a stranger, who had not been at Göschenen before.

‘Look,’ said Rudi. ‘There it is.’

And he pointed up at the mountain wall, where a big copper ring hung on a hook. And he went on:

‘The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa used to go this way into Italy, you see; he went six times and was crowned, both at Milan and at Rome. And as that made him German-Roman Emperor he had this ring put in the mountain on the German side, to show that he had wedded Germany to Italy.

‘And when that ring can be lifted off its hook, so the story goes, then the marriage, which has not been a happy one, will be dissolved.’

‘Then I will dissolve it,’ said Andrea, ‘as my fathers freed my poor country of Ticino from the tyrants in Schütz, Uri, and Unterwalden.’

‘Are you not Swiss?’ asked the magistrate sternly.

‘No, I am an Italian of the Swiss Confederacy.’

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With that he loaded his rifle and put in an iron bullet. Took aim and fired.

The ring was lifted from beneath, right off the hook; and down it fell, the ring of the Hohenstaufen Barbarossa.

'Long live Free Italy!' shouted Andrea with a flourish of his hat.

But no one answered.

Andrea picked up the ring, handed it to the magistrate, and said:

'Keep this ring in memory of me, and of to-day, when you wronged me.'

Then he went up to Gertrude and kissed her hand. And he climbed the mountain and vanished; reappeared and vanished into a cloud. But after a time he appeared again, higher up. It was not he, for it was his gigantic shadow on the cloud; and he stood with his fist raised, threateningly, over the German village.

'He is Satan himself,' said the Colonel.

'No, he is an Italian,' rejoined the postmaster.

'As it is late,' said the magistrate, 'I will tell you a state secret, which will be in the paper to-morrow.'

'Listen, listen!'

'News has been telegraphed that after the French Emperor was captured at Sedan the Italians drove the French troops out of Rome;

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and Victor 'Emanuel is at this moment marching on the capital.'

'That's news indeed! It will put a stop to pilgrimages from Germany to Rome! No doubt Andrea knew about it, or he wouldn't have been so high and mighty.'

'He may have known even more,' said the magistrate.

'What? What?'

'We shall see. We shall see.'

And they did see.

One day strange gentry came with instruments and gazed at the mountain; and it looked as if they were searching for Barbarossa's ring, for it was in that direction they pointed their telescope. And they examined the compass, as if they did not know where North and South were.

Then there was a big dinner at the 'Golden Horse,' and the magistrate was there. Over the dessert they talked about millions and millions of money.

A short time afterwards the 'Golden Horse' was demolished; the church was carried off bit by bit and set up some distance away; half the village was pulled down; barracks were built; the course of the stream was altered and the mill destroyed, the factory was closed and the cattle sold.

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Then came three thousand swarthy workmen, who spoke Italian.

The beautiful songs about old Switzerland and the delights of spring were heard no more.

Instead there was an incessant pounding, day and night; a drill was driven in where Barbarossa's ring had been; and then the blasting began, for that was the place where the tunnel was to enter the mountain.

Now, as every one knew, there was no difficulty about making a hole in the rock; but two holes were to be cut, one from each side; and the two holes were to meet, as straight as a nail; and that no one believed, for there were nine miles to cut through. Nine miles!

'Think if they miss! Then they'll have to start again.'

But the chief engineer had said: 'They will meet.'

And Andrea, on the Italian side, believed the chief engineer; for he was himself a safe shot, as we know. So he joined the gang of workmen and was front man.

It was work that suited Andrea. The light of the sun, the green carpets, and the white Alps he could no longer see; but he felt he was cutting a way of his own to Gertrude, the way through the mountain he

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had promised in a moment of boastfulness he would take.

For eight years he stood in the dark, leading a dog's life. He was naked for the most part, for there was a temperature there of eighty-five degrees. Sometimes they struck the source of a river, and then he lived in water; sometimes they struck a layer of clay, and then he lived in mud. Almost always the air was foul, and his fellow-workmen dropped; but new ones came. At last Andrea himself dropped and was sent to hospital. There he got the idea that the two tunnels would never meet, and it was his worst torment. Never meet!

There were people from Uri in the same room, delirious; their standing question in moments when the fever left them was:

‘Do you think we shall meet?’

No, the people from Ticino and Uri had never longed so eagerly to meet as here, in the mountain. They knew that if they met there the enmity of a thousand years would cease, and they would fall reconciled into one another's arms.

Andrea got well and came back to work. He took part in the strike of 1875; threw a stone or two, went to gaol, but got out again.

In 1877 Airola, his native village, was burnt down.

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'Now I've burnt my boats behind me; now I must go on,' he said.

In 1879 the 19th of July was a day of mourning. The chief engineer for the whole tunnel had gone into the mountain to take measurements and make calculations; and as he stood there he had a stroke and died. Right on the line. He should have had his tomb there, like a Pharaoh, in the biggest pyramid in the world; and his name, Favre, should have been carved there.

Still, the years went on. Andrea gathered money, experience, and strength. He never visited Göschenen; but once a year he went to the Sacred Wood and looked at the desolation, as he called it.

He never saw Gertrude, never wrote to her; he did not need to, for he lived with her in his thoughts, and he felt that she was his.

In the seventh year the magistrate died, in poverty.

'What luck that he was poor!' thought Andrea; and it isn't every son-in-law who has thought that.

In the eighth year something remarkable happened. Andrea, as front man, stood furthest in on the Italian side, working his crowbar. The air was scarce and stifling, so that he had a buzzing in his ears. He

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heard taps, like the taps of the wood-worm, called the death-watch beetle.

'Has my last moment come?' he thought, aloud.

'Your last moment!' answered something inside him, or outside him. And he was scared out of his wits.

The next day he heard the taps again, but more clearly, so that he thought it was the watch in his pocket.

But the day after, which was a holiday, he heard nothing; and now he thought it was only his ears; so he was frightened, and went to Mass; and in the silence of his heart he lamented the uncertainty of life. Hope had failed him, the hope of seeing the great day, the hope of winning the big reward offered to the first crowbar to go through the wall, the hope of winning Gertrude.

Still, on the Monday he was once more in front with his crowbar, but crestfallen; for he no longer believed that they would meet the Germans in the mountain.

He struck and struck, but without vigour, just as his sluggish heart had beaten after his tunnel sickness. Then suddenly he heard something like a shot and a mighty crash, but in the mountain, on the other side.

And then it came upon him that they had met.

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First he fell on his knees and thanked God ; then he got up and began hacking. He hacked on past breakfast, past lunch ; past intervals, past tea-time. He hacked with his left arm when his right had gone to sleep. All the time he was thinking of the chief engineer, who had fallen right up against the wall ; and he sang the song of the Three Children in the burning fiery furnace, for the air burned round him, while the water dripped on his head and his feet were in mud.

On the stroke of seven, on the 28th of February 1880, he fell flat against a crow-bar which shot right through the mountain wall.

A roaring hurrah from the other side woke him, and he realized that they had met, that his toils were over, and that he was the possessor of ten thousand lire.

Then, after breathing a short sigh to the All-merciful, he put his mouth to the hole and whispered, so that no one could hear, ' Gertrude ' ; and after that he shouted nine hurrahs to the Germans.

At eleven that night a ringing ' Look out ! ' was heard from the Italian side, and with a crash like siege artillery the wall collapsed. Germans and Italians fell into one another's arms weeping ; the Italians kissed ; and

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they all fell on their knees and sang a Te Deum.

It was a great moment; and it was 1880, the same year in which Stanley finished Africa, and Nordensköld finished the voyage of the *Vega*.

When the song of praise to the Eternal was finished, a workman stepped forward from the German side and handed the Italians an illuminated parchment. It was a memorial to the chief engineer, Louis Favre.

He was to be the first to go through the tunnel, and Andrea was to carry his memorial and his name by the little workmen's train to Airolo.

Andrea carried it, sitting proudly on a truck pushed in front of the engine.

It was a great day! And the night was not less great.

Wine was drunk at Airolo, Italian wine; and fireworks were let off. Speeches were made in honour of Louis Favre, Stanley, and Nordensköld; speeches were made in honour of St. Gotthard, the mysterious mountain-mass that had been for thousands of years a wall of separation between Germany and Italy, between North and South. Yes, truly an estranger, but also a uniter. For St. Gotthard has stood there distributing its water impartially to the German Rhine and the French

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Rhône, to the North sea and the Mediterranean. . . .

‘And to the Adriatic,’ interrupted a man from Ticino. ‘Please do not forget the Ticino, which waters the greatest river of Italy, the mighty Po.’

‘Bravo! Better and better! Long live St. Gotthard, great Germany, free Italy, and new France!’

It was a great night, after a great day.

Next morning Andrea stood in the engineer’s office. He wore his Italian hunting-dress, with a feather in his hat, a gun on his shoulder, and a knapsack on his back; his face was white, and his hands were white.

‘Ah, you’re satisfied with the tunnel now,’ said the engineer-paymaster, or money-man as they called him. ‘Well, no one can grudge you that, and besides there’s nothing left now but bricklaying. So you’re cashiered.’

The money-man opened a book, wrote on a piece of paper, and counted out ten thousand lire in gold.

Andrea wrote his mark, put the gold in his knapsack, and went.

He threw himself on to a workmen’s train; and in ten minutes he was at the fallen partition wall.

LEGEND OF SAINT GOTTHARD

Fires were burning in the mountain on both sides of the rails, the workmen cheered Andrea and waved their caps. It was splendid.

In ten minutes more he was out on the German side. But when he saw daylight in the opening, the train stopped and he got out.

He went towards the green daylight, and saw the village again, sunny and verdant, and the village was newly rebuilt, white, radiant, lovelier than ever. And as he came towards them the workmen greeted their first man.

Straight towards a little house he turned his steps, and under a walnut-tree stood Gertrude, quiet, more beautiful, gentler, just as if she had been standing there waiting for him for eight years.

‘I have come,’ he said, ‘as I told you I would, through the mountain. Will you go with me to my country?’

‘I will go with you wherever you like.’

‘You have had the ring already; have you got it still?’

‘I have got it still.’

‘Then we will go at once. No, do not turn back; you shall take nothing with you.’

And they went hand in hand. But they did not go towards the tunnel.

LEGEND OF SAINT GOTTHARD

‘Up on the mountain!’ said Andrea, making for the old road over the pass. ‘My way led through darkness towards you; now I will live in the light with you, for you!’

Jubal the Selfless

JUBAL THE SELFLESS

THERE was once a king called John the Landless; and you can guess the reason. But another time there was a great singer called Jubal the Selfless, and I will tell you why.

Klang was the name he had from his soldier father, and there was music in it. But he also had (from nature) a strong will, which was like a rod of iron down his back; and that is a great gift, and one to keep hold of through the battle of life. Even when he was a baby and only beginning to talk, he did not say 'he,' as other small boys do when they are talking about themselves; he called himself 'I' from the first. 'You aren't I,' said his parents. When he got a little older he expressed a wish by saying 'I will.' But then his father said to him:

'You have no will'; or 'Little boys don't will.'

That was stupid of the soldier; but he knew no better, for he was a soldier, and trained only to want what his officer wanted.

Little Klang thought it funny that he 'had no will' when he had such a strong one, but there was no help for it.

When he had grown up a bit his father

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asked him one day, 'What do you want to be?'

The boy didn't know, and he had given up wanting, because it was forbidden. True, he had a liking for music, but he didn't dare say so, for he thought it would be stopped if he did. So he answered, like an obedient son, 'I don't want anything.'

'Then you shall be a wine-merchant,' said his father.

Whether it was because his father knew a wine-merchant, or because wine had a special fascination for him, no one can say. Anyhow, young Klang was planted in a wine-cellar, and it suited him very well.

There was a lovely smell of red sealing-wax and French wine down there, and there were big vaulted rooms like churches. Sitting by the barrel, as the red wine ran, his heart rejoiced, and he sang quietly to himself, beginning with any songs he had happened to hear.

His boss, who lived buried in wine, liked singing and merriment, and kept the lad in his service; it sounded fine down in the vaults. And when he struck up 'The Vaulted Cellar Deep,' customers would go down, and the boss liked that.

One fine day, a commercial traveller, who had been an operatic singer, came, and when

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he heard Klang he was so delighted that he asked him to go out on the spree that evening.

And they played skittles, ate' crayfish with dill, drank punch, and above all sang.

Over their glasses, when they had made friends and pledged their friendship, the traveller said :

' Why don't you go on the stage? '

' I? ' answered Klang. ' Could I do that? '

' You must say " I will," and then you can.'

That was a new doctrine, for since he was three young Klang had not used the words ' I ' and ' will ' together.

Now he dared neither will nor wish, and he prayed not to be led into temptation again.

But the traveller came back again, several times, and brought opera-singers with him. The temptation grew too strong; and Klang made up his mind to it one evening when he had been applauded by a real professor.

So he gave his employer notice, and thanked his friend the traveller over a glass of wine for giving him back his self-confidence and his will; ' his will, that rod of iron in a man's back holding him upright so that he does not fall down on all fours.' And never would he forget his friend, who had taught him to believe in himself.

Then he went to say good-bye to his father and mother.

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‘I want to be a singer!’ he said in a voice that rang through the cottage.

His father’s eye went towards the birch of correction, and his mother cried; but it was no use.

‘Don’t lose yourself, my son!’ was his mother’s last word.

Young Klang got money to go abroad with. There he learned to sing properly, according to the rules, and in a few years became a celebrity. Made money and got a manager of his own, who put him on his legs.

Now friend Klang flourished, and could say not only ‘I will’ but ‘I command.’ His ego grew out of all conscience, and he could not bear any other egos in his neighbourhood. He denied nothing to himself, and he did not deny himself either. But now that he was going home again to his own country his manager informed him that it does not do to call yourself Klang when you are a celebrity; he would have to take a fine name, if possible a foreign one, for that was the custom.

The ‘great man’ had a struggle with himself; changing one’s name was not exactly pleasant; it seemed rather like denying one’s father and mother, and there were times when it looked ugly.

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But, as it was the custom, well and good ; there was no more to be said.

He hunted in the Bible to find the right name, for that was where it would be.

And when he found Jubal, Lamech's son, who invented all manner of music, he took it. It was a good name, the Hebrew for 'bassoon.' As his manager was an Englishman, he wanted Klang to call himself 'Mr.,' so he did. 'Mr. Jubal,' then.

Now the whole thing was very harmless, for it was the custom ; all the same, strangely enough, with the new name Klang became a different person. The past was wiped out ; and Mr. Jubal felt like a true-born Englishman, spoke Swedish with an accent, had side-whiskers and high collars ; even check-suits grew on him of their own accord, like bark on a tree ; he got stand-offish and greeted people with one eyelid ; never turned round when an acquaintance called after him in the street, and always *stood* right in the middle of the inside of trams.

He hardly knew himself !

Still, he came home to his country and sang at the Opera House. He played kings and prophets, champions of liberty and demons ; and he was such a good actor that, when he had a part to perform, he thought he was the person he was acting.

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Now, one day he was walking down the street and being a demon in some story or other--but he was also Mr. Jubal.

He heard some one behind him calling 'Klang!' Of course he didn't turn round, because an Englishman doesn't, and besides Klang wasn't his name any longer.

But 'Klang!' was shouted a second time; and there stood his friend the commercial traveller in front of him, with an enquiring look, asking in a shy but friendly manner:

'Klang, isn't it?'

Mr. Jubal was possessed by the demon; showing all his teeth and opening his mouth wide as if he was letting out a deep note from one of his cranial cavities, he boomed out a curt 'no!'

Then his friend recognized him, and went his way. He was an enlightened man, and knew life and people, and himself into the bargain, and he was therefore neither angry nor surprised.

But Mr. Jubal thought he was; and hearing these words inside his head, 'Before the cock crow thrice thou shalt deny me,' he did like Peter: went into a porch and wept bitterly. That was what *he* did, in his thoughts, but the demon in his heart laughed.

After that laughing was what he did more than anything else: at evil and good, at

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sorrow and shame, at everything and every one.

Though his father and mother knew from the paper who Mr. Jubal was, they never went to the Opera, for they thought it was something to do with hoops and horses, and they did not want to see their son there.

Mr. Jubal was now the greatest of all opera-singers, and he had certainly got rid of a great deal of his ego, but he still had his will.

Then his day came. There was a little girl in the ballet who could bewitch men, and Jubal in his turn was bewitched. So badly bewitched that he asked if he might be hers. . . . (He meant, of course, that she should be his, but you mustn't say that.)

'You shall be mine,' said the witch, 'if I may . . .'

'You may have anything you like,' answered Jubal.

The girl took him at his word, and they were married. First he taught her to sing and act; and then, she got everything she wanted. But, as she was a witch, she wanted all the things he didn't want, and little by little she got his will into her pocket.

One fine day Mistress Jubal was a prima donna; so prime that when the public called for Jubal they meant the wife and not the husband.

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Jubal wanted to fight his way up again, but he was unwilling to do it at his wife's expense, and so he could not.

He began to be blotted out and forgotten.

The brilliant circle of friends that Mr. Jubal had collected at his bachelor home now collected in his house round Madame Jubal, who was simply called Jubal.

No one looked at Mr., no one drank with him; and if he tried to talk no one listened to him; it was as if he didn't exist, and his wife was treated as if she wasn't married.

Then Mr. Jubal was left alone, and he went out alone to get drinks.

One evening he went out in search of company. He was prepared to put up with any one, so long as he was a human being.

He caught sight of his old friend the commercial traveller, sitting alone with nothing to do; and he thought, 'Here's a human being for me, old Lundberg'; so he went up to the table and said good-evening. But then his friend's face changed, so grimly that Jubal couldn't help asking, 'Aren't you Lundberg?'

'Yes.'

'Don't you recognize me—Jubal?'

'No.'

'Don't you know Klang, your old friend?'

'No. He died long ago.'

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Then Jubal realized that he was dead, in a way, and he went out.

The next day he left the Opera, and became a singing-teacher with the title of Professor.

After a time he went abroad, and stayed away for many years.

Sorrow and disappointment made him grow old early.

But he was glad of it, for then he wouldn't have to wait long. But he did not age as fast as he wanted to, so he got a white wig with long hair. That suited him, for it made him unrecognizable, even to himself.

With slow steps and hands behind his back he walked along the pavement brooding; they thought he was looking for some one, or waiting for some one. People who caught his eye saw no expression in it; if any one tried to make his acquaintance, he only talked small talk. And he never said 'I,' never 'I think,' but 'It seems.' He had lost his ego, and he did not realize what had happened till one day when he was shaving. He had lathered himself and was just going to start with the razor in front of the looking-glass. He looked, and saw the room behind him, but he did not see his face. Then he understood how it was. And he was seized with a violent longing to find his ego again. He had given

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the best part of it to his wife, who had got his will, and he decided to look her up.

When he came back to his native country and walked through the streets of the town in his white wig, no one recognized him. But a musician, who had been in Italy, said aloud in the street, 'He is a maestro.'

And all of a sudden Jubal felt that he was a great composer. He bought writing-paper, and began writing a score, that is to say he wrote a lot of long and short notes on the lines, some for violins, others for wood wind, others for brass. Then he sent it in to the Academy. But no one could play it, for it was nothing, only notes.

Then one day he was walking down the street and met a painter, who had been in Paris. 'There goes a model,' said the painter. Jubal heard it, and at once believed he was a model; for he believed everything that was said about him, because he didn't know who or what he was.

So when his wife, who had got his ego, came into his mind, he decided to look for her. He did, but she had married another man, a baron, and gone far away.

Then he got tired of looking; and like all tired men he began to long for the source of his life, his mother. He knew that she was widowed, and had settled in a tumble-down cottage in the hills, and he went there.

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'Don't you know me?' he asked.

'What's your name?' his mother asked.

'Your son's name, don't you know it?'

'My son's name was Klang, but yours is Jubal, and I don't know it.'

'She denies me.'

'As you have denied yourself, and your mother.'

'Why did you take my will from me when I was a child?'

'You gave your will to a woman.'

'I had to, or I should not have got her. But why did you say that I had no will?'

'Ah, dear child, that was father, and he knew no better. Forgive him now; he is dead. Besides, children should have no will, but grown men should have one.'

'Fancy you being able to clear it up so well, Mother! Children mustn't have one, but grown-ups must.'

'Oh, Gustav!' said his mother. 'Gustav Klang. . . .'

They were his names; and when he heard them he was himself again. All his parts, kings and demons, maestri and models, flew away, and he was just his mother's son.

He laid his head in her lap, and said:

'Now let me die! Let me die!'

The Golden-Helmets in Alleberg

THE GOLDEN-HELMETS, IN
ÄLLEBERG

ANDERS was born in the Falan district, and had in his youth tramped all over the country with a yaid-measure and a bundle of cloth. But the time came when he took it into his head that it was better to tramp with a rifle on his shoulder, and let the King pay for his shoe-leather, and so he enlisted in the Västgöta-Dal Regiment. So it came about that he was ordered up to Stockholm on garrison duty.

Friend Kask, for that was what he was called now, got leave one day; and consequently set out to go to Skansen. But when he got to the gate he found he had no sixpence in his pocket, and had to stay outside. He looked at the palings for a long time, and thought, 'I'd better walk round; there's sure to be a stile somewhere; if the worst comes to the worst I'll climb over.'

The sun was setting as he started out along the foot of the hill by the shore, but he could see the paling high up against the sky, and inside it he heard music and singing. Kask walked on and on, further and further round,

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but he saw no stile, and the paling disappeared into a hazel-wood. Tired out, he threw himself down on the hillside, and began to crack nuts.

Along came a squirrel, and cocked his tail up in the air.

‘Leave my nuts alone,’ said the squirrel.

‘Yes, if you ’ll show me the way to the stile,’ said Kask.

‘A bit further on,’ answered the squirrel.

He scuttled on in front, and the soldier followed. A minute later and the squirrel had vanished.

Then a hedgehog came along, rustling the leaves.

‘Come with me,’ he said, ‘and I ’ll show you the stile.’

‘Shall I gang wi’ MacPrickle? No, thank you!’

But the hedgehog went with him all the same.

Then came the viper. He was a gentleman; he had a lisp and could twist in all directions.

‘Come with me,’ he said, ‘and you thall thee the thtile.’

‘All right,’ said Kask.

‘But you mutht be polite; you muthn’t twead on me! I like politeneth.’

‘We soldiers aren’t gentlemen, you know,’

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said Master Kask. 'However, I'm not wearing my heavy boots.'

'Tread on him,' said the hedgehog, 'or he'll bite you—ever so politely!'

At that the viper raised his crest and wriggled away.

'Look out!' said the hedgehog, and went for the snake. 'I'm not a gentleman, but I can use my prickles, I can!'

The hedgehog finished off the snake and disappeared.

The soldier was now alone in the wood, and was sorry he had despised MacPrickle.

It had got dark, but the twilight showed through the birch leaves, and there was complete silence.

Then the soldier thought he saw a big yellow hand waving, backwards and forwards. He went towards it and found that it was a maple-leaf, which does gesticulate like that with its fingers, though no one knows what it means.

As he stood watching he heard an asp-tree shivering:

'Whoo! I'm cold,' said the asp. 'My feet are wet, and I'm so frightened.'

'Well, what are you frightened of?' asked the soldier.

'Oh! There's a goblin sitting inside the rock.'

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Then the soldier knew what the maple had meant, and he actually saw a goblin sitting inside the rock, cooking porridge.

‘What are you?’ said the goblin.

‘I’m in the Västgöta-Dals. What are you in?’

‘I’m in Alleberg,’ said the goblin.

‘But Alleberg is in Västergylln,’ answered the soldier.

‘We’ve moved here now,’ said the goblin.

‘That’s a lie!’ answered the soldier, seizing the saucepan-handle and tipping the porridge into the fire. ‘Now we’ll look into the mouse-hole,’ he said, and went into the mountain.

There sat an ogre by a big fire, heating an iron bar.

‘Good evening!’ said the soldier, and held out his hand.

‘The same to you!’ answered the ogre, and gave him the iron bar, red-hot as it was.

Kask took it, and squeezed the iron till it hissed.

‘How hot your hands are! What’s your name?’

‘I am Giant Swede,’ said the ogre.

‘That was a good old handshake, a real Swedish one, and now I see that I *am* in Alleberg. I wonder if the Golden-Helmets are still sleeping here?’

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‘Hush! Hush! Hush!’ said the giant, shaking the poker at him. ‘You shall see them, because you’re in the Västgöta-Dals. But you must solve my riddle first,’ said the giant.

‘If you want to pick a bone with a fellow-countryman, go ahead! But put the poker away first.’

‘Well, Kask, you shall tell me the history of Sweden, while I smoke a bit of a pipe, and then you shall see the Golden-Helmets afterwards. THE WHOLE HISTORY OF SWEDEN.’

‘I can manage that, though the Corporals’ School wasn’t much in my line, you know. I must ginger up my memory a little first, though.’

‘But there’s one condition; you mustn’t mention the name of a king, because if you do they’ll be angry in there; and WHEN THEY’RE ANGRY, then, you know . . .’

‘That’s awful difficult! But light your bit of a pipe, and I’ll begin. Here’s a light for you!’

The soldier clutched his head for a moment, and then began:

‘One, two, three! In 1161 or thereabouts Sweden began; a kingdom, a king, and an archbishop. Is that enough?’

‘No,’ said Swede, ‘it’s too little. Go on.’

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‘Well, then! By 1359 the Swedish nation was in existence, for then the Parliament of the Four Estates met, and it lasted, with breaks, up to 1866.’

‘You’re a soldier,’ said Swede, ‘and so of course you’ll say something about wars.’

‘There are only two wars with anything to say for themselves; and they ended in two peaces, the Peace of Brömsebro in 1645, when we got Härjedalen, Jämtland, and Gottland; and the Peace of Roskilde in 1658, when we got Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, and Bohuslän. And that finishes Swedish history; the others were only brawls.’

‘Well, what about constitutions?’

‘We got an absolute monarchy in 1680, and it lasted till 1718; then came the Age of Freedom, till 1789, when the absolute monarchy was restored. And then Adlersparre made a revolution in 1809 and got Hans Järta to make up the Swedish Constitution, which still exists. Now you don’t want to know any more. Have you smoked your pipe out?’

‘Yes!’ said the giant. ‘Just this moment. And now I’ll show you the Golden-Helmets.’

The old man struggled to his feet and went into the rock, followed by the soldier.

‘Walk quietly!’ said the giant, and pointed

THE GOLDEN-HELMETS IN ÄLLEBERG

to a knight in a golden helmet, who sat sleeping by a rock-door. But just at that moment Kask struck his heel against a stone so that the sparks flew. The Golden-Helmet woke at once, and called out as sharply as if he had gone to sleep on guard:

‘Is it time yet?’

‘Not yet!’ answered the giant.

The knight with the golden helmet sat down and went off to sleep again at once.

The giant opened the rock-door, and the soldier saw a big hall in front of him. An endless table stretched right down the middle of the room, and in the half-light they saw the glorious company of the Golden-Helmets sitting in arm-chairs which had crowns stamped in gold on their backs. At the short end sat a man who was a head taller than the others; his beard reached down to his waist, like Moses’s or Isaiah’s; he was Chairman and had a hammer in his hand.

They all seemed to be asleep, but not the sleep which gives us back our strength during the night, nor the sleep that is called eternal.

‘Go in,’ said the giant, ‘and you will hear their Annual Meeting.’

He touched a big garnet in the side of the rock, and a thousand lamps lit up.

Then the Golden-Helmets awoke.

THE GOLDEN-HELMETS IN ALLEBERG

'Who's there?' asked the man with the prophet's beard.

'Swede!' answered the giant.

'A good name!' answered Gustav Vasa, for it was he. 'What time has passed?'

'It is the year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Three.'

'Time moves on; have you too moved forward? Are you one country and one people?'

'We are. But since your day the country has grown. Jämtland, Härjedalen, and Gotland have been added.'

'Who took them?'

'Well, it happened under Queen Christina; but it was her guardians who did it.'

'And then?'

'Then we won Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, and Bohuslän.'

'The deuce you did! And who took *them*?'

'Charles the Tenth.'

'And after that?'

'That is all.'

'All?'

Some one struck the table.

'Eric the Holy,' said Gustav Vasa.

'Eric Jedvardson is my name, and I was never holy. May I ask Swede what has become of my Finland?'

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'Finland went back to Russia because the men of the Anjala League demanded it of their own accord. It was by the Peace of Fredrikshamn in 1809, when the Finns swore allegiance to the Czar.

Gustav Adolf then spoke.

'Where are the Baltic countries?'

'Taken back by their rightful owners,' answered Swede.

'And the Emperor, is he still reigning?'

'There are two emperors, one in Berlin and one in Vienna.'

'Two Hapsburgers?'

'No, one Hapsburger and one Hohenzollern, and that is what Bismarck means by "United Germany."'

'God bless my soul! And are the Catholics in North Germany converted?'

'No. The Catholics are in a majority in the North German parliament, and the Berlin Kaiser is trying to influence the College of Cardinals and control the papal election.'

'Is there still a Pope, then?'

'Certainly there is, though one has just died.'

'And what does the Brandenburger want with Rome?'

'No one knows; some say that he wants to be Romish-German Emperor of the Evangelical Faith.'

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'A syncretist emperor, such as John George of Saxony dreamed of. 'That is all I want to hear. 'The ways of Providence are wonderful, and we mortals what are we? Dust and ashes.'

Charles the Twelfth spoke next.

'Can Swede tell me what has become of Poland?'

'There is no Poland. It has been partitioned.'

'Partitioned? And Russia?'

'Russia has just been commemorating the foundation of Petersburg, and the Mayor of Stockholm took part in the procession.'

'As a prisoner?'

'No. As a guest. All the nations are now friends in a manner of speaking, and a little while ago in China a French army corps served voluntarily under a German Field-Marshal.'

'Well I never! Are people friends with their enemies nowadays?'

'Yes, they are pervaded with the spirit of Christianity, and there is a Permanent International Court of Justice at the Hague.'

'What?'

'An International Court of Justice.'

'Then my day is past. God's will be done.'

The king lowered the visor of his helmet, and spoke no more.

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Charles the Eleventh then spoke.

‘Well, Swede, how is it with the finances of old Sweden?’

‘It’s hard to say, for I don’t think the book-keeping can have been done correctly. But one thing is certain, or rather two things; that half the soil of Sweden is pawned to foreign countries for nearly three hundred million crowns——’

‘God have mercy on us!’

‘And the municipal debts amount to nearly two hundred million.’

‘Two hundred?’

‘And between 1881 and 1885 one hundred and forty-six thousand Swedes emigrated.’

‘Let me hear no more!’

Gustav Vasa struck the table with his hammer.

‘Judging by what I have heard, it is not well with my country. You are drones, idle, jealous, and careless; sluggish in action, zealous in obstruction. But tell me, Swede, how is it with my Church and my clergy?’

‘The clergy are landowners and dairy-farmers; the bishops have stipends of anything up to thirty thousand crowns, and settle down to collect money, just as they did before the Decree of Västerås; what’s more, they’re almost all heretics, or free-

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thinkers as we call it. No doubt there will be a new reformation of some sort or other.'

'Ah. . . . But what is the music and singing up there?'

'Skansen. It is a hill on which we have collected all our national memorials, as if, foreseeing the end, we were making our will and collecting souvenirs of the past. It shows respect for our fathers, but that is all.'

'It seems from what we have heard at this Annual Meeting that the labours and accomplishments of our forefathers have been engulfed by the stream of time; one thing rises to the surface, another sinks to the bottom. Here we sit like shadows of ourselves, and for you who are alive that is all we ought to be. . . . Put out the lights!'

Giant Swede put out the lights and went out with the soldier at his heels. He ordered him into a sort of cage.

'If you talk about this,' said the giant, 'you will be unlucky.'

'Yes, I understand,' answered Kask. 'But I shall lay it to heart. Just think! They have drunk up old Sweden and put her in pop with the foreigners.' Why, it's absolutely awful; if it's true!'

'Click!' said the engine; and the lift

THE GOLDEN-HELMETS IN ALLEBERG

went up with the soldier, up to Skansen. And there he stood, right in the sunset, just as Håsjö church bells were ringing, and Gustav Vasa was marching into Stockholm surrounded by his dalesmen.

*Blue-Wing finds the Golden
Saxifrage*

BLUE-WING FINDS THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

ONCE upon a time a rich man visited a poor island and fell in love with it. Why, the rich man could not tell, but he was enchanted; perhaps the island was like a forgotten memory of his childhood, or a beautiful dream.

He bought the island, built a villa, and planted all sorts of lovely trees, bushes, and flowers. On the far side was the sea; he had a landing-stage of his own with a flag-pole and white boats; oaks as tall as churches shaded his house, and there were green meadows over which cool winds played. He had a wife, children, servants, and horses—everything; but one thing he lacked; he had forgotten a little thing, but the most important of all: spring water. Wells were dug in the soil and blasted in the rock, but all that came out of them was brown salt water. It was filtered till it was crystal-clear, but it was still salt. That was the fly in the ointment.

In those days came one of God's favoured children, who had been fortunate in all his doings, and was among the most famous men in the world. We remember how he drove his diamond staff into the rock, and, like

BLUE-WING FINDS

Moses, made the rock give forth water. Now this rock was to be drilled, as others had been, and all of them had produced water. They drilled here; they spent a hundred dollars, a thousand, several thousands, but all they got was salt water. Clearly there was no blessing on this place; and the rich man learned once for all that you cannot get everything for money, not even a drink of fresh water when things are against you.

Then he became heavy of heart, and life smiled no longer. However, the school-master on the island began reading old books, and sent for a wise ancient who walked about with a divining-rod; but it was no use.

But the parson, who was wiser, called together the school-children one day, and offered a reward to any one who could find a plant called Gold-dust, which grows above the veins of springs.

'It has flowers like the lady's mantle and leaves like the saxifrage, which is also called stone-break. And the top leaves have a powder on them that looks like gold-dust. Now, remember!'

'Flowers like the lady's mantle, and leaves like the saxifrage,' the children repeated; and they ran out into the woods and fields to look for the Gold-dust.

None of the children found it. One little

THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

boy did come home with a sun spurge, which has a little gold at the top; but it is poisonous, and it wasn't the one. So they got tired of looking.

But there was a little girl who didn't go to school yet; her father was a dragoon, owned a little croft, and was more poor than rich. His only treasure was his little daughter; and she was called in the village by the pretty name of Blue-wing, because she was always dressed in a sky-blue jacket with wide sleeves, which fluttered as she moved about. By the way, there is a little blue butterfly called the blue-wing; you can see him at the height of summer on blades of grass, and his wings are like the petals of flax-blossom—a flying flax-flower, with feelers on which specks of dust settle.

Blue-wing, that is to say the dragoon's Blue-wing, was a strange child, and talked oh so sensibly but not often, so that no one knew where she got her words from. The whole village liked her, animals and all; chickens and calves followed her about and even the bull allowed her to pat him. She often went out alone, got lost, and came home again; but when she was asked where she had been she could not say. All the same, she had a great deal to tell on these occasions. She had seen strange things, and had met old

, BLUE-WING FINDS

men and old wives, who had said this and said that. The dragoon left her to herself, for he fancied he had noticed there was some one who protected her.

One morning Blue-wing went out on one of her raids. Through meadows and copses she steered her little steps; and she sang, mostly to herself, songs which no one had heard before and which came to her. The morning sun shone, as tenderly as if it had just been born, the air seemed like a giant refreshed by sleep, the dew was evaporating and its cool breath caressed her little face.

As she entered the wood she met an old man in green.

'Good morning, Blue-wing,' said the old man. 'I am the gardener of Sunny Glade. Come along and look at my flowers.'

'Too great an honour for me,' answered Blue-wing.

'No, for you have never tortured flowers.'

So they walked on together till they reached the shore. There they found a pretty little bridge which led over to an island, and they crossed it.

What a garden! There was everything in it, of every size, and it was arranged like a book:

He himself lived in a house built of live

THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

evergreen trees—pines, firs, and junipers with their foliage on; the floors were made of living evergreen bushes and plants. Moss and lichen grew in the gaps, to make the floor firm; and the floor boards consisted of crowberry bushes, bear-berry bushes, and twinflowers. The roof was made of creepers: Virginia creeper, honeysuckle, clematis, ivy; and it was so solid that not a drop of rain came through. Outside the door there were bee-hives, but butterflies instead of bees lived in them. And when they swarmed out, it was a sight to see.

‘I don’t like torturing bees,’ said the old man. ‘And besides they’re so ugly; they look like hairy coffee-beans, and what is more they sting, like vipers.’

They went out into the garden.

‘Now you shall read nature’s A B C book; you shall learn the secrets of the flowers and the signs of the plants. But you mustn’t ask, only listen and answer. . . . Look here, child: on this grey stone grows something like brown paper. It is the first thing that comes when a rock gets wet. The rock goes mouldy; and the mould is called lichen. Here are two kinds. One is like reindeer’s horn; and it’s called reindeer lichen, and is the most important food of the reindeer. The other is called Iceland lichen, and is like . . . What is it like?’

BLUE-WING FINDS

‘It’s like a lung, because the nature book says so.’

‘Yes, under the magnifying-glass it’s like the air-bladders in the lung, and, you see, that was what taught people to use it for chest diseases. Well, anyhow, when the lichen on the rock has collected mould, mosses come. They have a kind of simple flower on them, and they seed; they are like ice-plants, but you’ll see that they’re also like heather, and coniferous trees, and all sorts of things, for all plants are relations. This feather-moss looks like a fir-tree, but has a seed-vessel like the poppy, only simpler. On the moss, heather soon begins to grow. Now, if you look at heather through a strong magnifying-glass, it turns into a willow-herb (in Latin, *epilobium*), or a rhododendron, just as the elm is simply a large nettle. A carpet of mould is now ready, and in vegetable mould anything will grow; man has imprisoned a certain number of plants for his use, but nature herself instructed him which to take and how to use them. This is no more remarkable than the decoration and colouring flowers have acquired to tell insects where there is honey. You have seen ears of rye with what look like bakers’ utensils hung out as a shop-sign. • And if you inspect flax, the most useful of all plants, you will see that it has itself taught man how

THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

to spin. Just look into the flower and you 'il find the flax-head, where specks of dust collect round the pin like tow round a spindle. To make her meaning clearer still, nature caused a little parasitic plant called bindweed to wind round the whole plant, up and down, backwards and forwards, just like the shuttle in the loom. The strange thing is that it wasn't a man but a moth that first discovered flax could be spun. He is called the flax leaf-roller; and he spins out of the leaves with his own silk little cradle-clothes and sheets for his infants. But since flax began to be cultivated, the shrewd fellow has speeded up his spinning so that his young are ready to fly just before the flax is picked.

' And you 'd never guess what plants there are that produce drugs. Look at that big poppy, fire-red like fever and madness. But at the bottom of the flower there is a black cross; that's the chemist's "Poison" label. And in the middle of the cross stands a Roman vase with grooves in it. If you scratch these, out runs a drug that can cause death if it is wrongly used; but rightly used it causes death's good brother, sleep. So wise and open-handed is nature. Now we will look at the Gold-dust . . . '

Here he paused, to see if Blue-wing was inquisitive. But she wasn't.

BLUE-WING FINDS

‘ Now we will look at the Gold-dust.

Another pause. No, Blue-wing knew how to keep her mouth shut, though she was so small.

‘ Now we will look at the Gold-dust, which has flowers like the lady’s mantle, and leaves like the saxifrage. That is her sign; and tells you where springs are to be found. The lady’s mantle collects dew and rain in its petals, and is itself a clear little fountain; but the saxifrage breaks rocks. Without rocks you will get no spring, never mind how far off the rock is. That is the message of the Golden Saxifrage to those who understand. It grows here on the island, and you shall see where it grows, because you are a good girl. From your little hand the rich man shall receive fresh water for his thirsty soul, and through you this island shall be blessed. Go in peace, child. When you get into the hazel-wood you will find a silver lime on your right; under it lies a copper-coloured blind-worm, who is not dangerous. He will show you the way to the Golden Saxifrage. But before you go, give me a kiss; only if you like, though.’

Blue-wing raised her little mouth to the old man’s face and kissed him. Then his face changed; and there he stood, fifty years younger.

THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

'I have kissed a child and grown young,' said the gardener; 'and you have repaid your debt to me. Good-bye!'

Blue-wing went to the hazel-wood. There was the silver lime, making music, and bumble-bees were singing in tune among the blossom. Sure enough the blind-worm was there, but the copper looked a little verdigrised.

'There's Blue-wing, who is to have the Golden Saxifrage,' said the blind-worm. 'You shall have it, but on three conditions: you mustn't blab, you mustn't tell fibs, and you mustn't be inquisitive.' Now go straight on, and you'll find the Golden Saxifrage.'

Blue-wing went straight on. She met a lady.

'Good morning,' said the lady. 'Have you been to see the gardener in Sunny Glade?'

'Good morning, lady,' said Blue-wing, and went on.

'At any rate you don't blab,' said the lady. Then she met a gipsy.

'Where are you going?' asked the gipsy.

'I'm going straight on,' answered Blue-wing.

'You don't tell fibs, then,' said the gipsy.

Then she met a milk-cart. But she couldn't understand why the horse sat in the cart and the driver was harnessed to the shafts and pulled.

BLUE-WING FINDS

'Now I'll bolt,' said the driver, and started running so fast that the horse fell in the ditch. . . . 'Now I'll water the rye,' said the driver, and took the top off a milk-can to water the field.

Blue-wing thought it was funny, but instead of staring she went on.

'You aren't inquisitive either,' said the milkman.

And now Blue-wing stood at the foot of a rock, and the sun shone through the hazels on to the green stem of a juicy plant, which glittered like the brightest gold.

It was the Golden Saxifrage; and Blue-wing saw how it followed the vein of the spring, from the rock down into the rich man's field.

She dropped on to her knees and picked three of the flowers, which she hid in her apron; and went home with them to her father.

The dragoon put on his helmet, his sword; and his jacket; and they went to the parson. Then they all three went to the rich man.

'Blue-wing has found the Golden Saxifrage!' said the parson, as he stood in the dining-room door. 'And now we are all rich men, the whole village; for the island will be a watering-place!'

And it was a watering-place; steamers and

THE GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE

tradesmen came ; and they had a hotel and a post-office, a doctor and a chemist's shop. Gold poured into the village every summer, and that is the story of the Golden Saxifrage, and how it made gold.

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